

OCTOBER 2014 VOLUME 24 ISSUE 10

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound



THE 'GONE GIRL' INTERVIEW

DAVID FINCHER

PLUS

● NICK CAVE IN '20,000 DAYS ON EARTH' ● PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI'S 'IDA' ● PETER LORRE
● WERNER HERZOG ● DAVID CRONENBERG'S 'MAPS TO THE STARS' ● LAUREN BACALL

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Life in a day

20,000 Days on Earth presents an inventive docufiction portrait of 24 hours in the life of Nick Cave, merging archive footage, live performance and dream sequences. By **Thirza Wakefield**

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FAMILY IS A DISASTER
WAITING TO HAPPEN



VALERIA
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COVER

David Fincher photographed by Frank Ockenfels. Retouched by DawkinsColour

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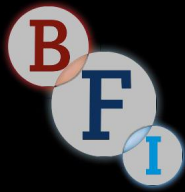


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Editorial Nick James



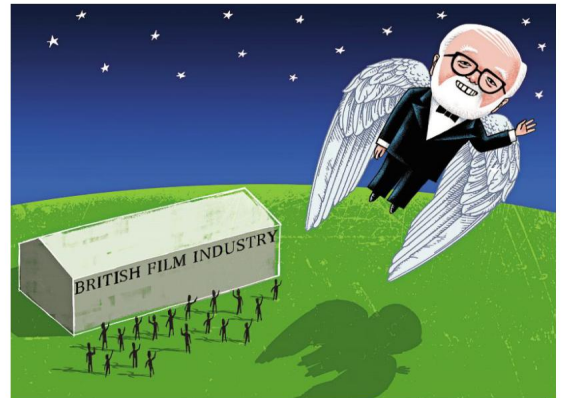
GIMME SHELTER

The recent death of Richard Attenborough was an instant reminder not only of a world that has passed – by which I mean that 1950s British film studio world so eloquently described by Jeremy Thomas in these pages earlier this year (*'The making of a super-producer', S&S, April*) – but also of what a colossus the actor-director was when representing and lobbying for the British film industry. For much of my career in writing about film, whenever British filmmaking needed someone to front its interests, Lord Attenborough was that figure. Having been a success in front of and behind the camera for such a long time, he was instantly recognised by all the necessary constituents of a UK film political audience: by his peers, by the Americans, by British politicians and by the national and international public. When he was on stage in a tub-thumping capacity, you often felt that sentimental tears wouldn't be very far away, but neither would feel-good persuasion. I can't do better than echo Ronald Bergan's description of him in the *Guardian* as a "cheerful humanitarian and imperishable idealist", but in wanting to pay tribute to him in a useful way here, what strikes me most – beyond his already well-praised filmography – is the vacuum he leaves behind.

In a television tribute, Melvyn Bragg said Attenborough acted as a kind of protective canopy over British film. Lord Puttnam went further, crediting him with actually saving the industry. In straitened times, who would want to fill shoes like that? It's certainly noticeable that, since the stroke and consequent accident that in effect ended Attenborough's career in 2008, no one has tried to step into them. The kind of role he played in the industry certainly wouldn't suit the many maverick figures among our best-known filmmakers. You can't imagine Ken Loach, Mike Leigh or Stephen Frears being interested or indeed plausible candidates. Alan Parker is too controversial a bruiser; Ridley Scott's no spokesperson. Anthony Minghella might have done it, and indeed, his chairmanship of the BFI showed him assuming a similar role – but he died the same year as Attenborough's accident.

It's worth considering, however, why the British industry hasn't felt the need for such a protective, lovable establishment figure. Of course, it has some very effective leaders. Lord Puttnam is obviously a man who knows his way around the corridors of power. Jeremy Thomas certainly has the industry stature, as

What is striking is the vacuum Lord Attenborough leaves behind. Melvyn Bragg said he acted as a protective canopy over British film. Lord Puttnam credited him with saving the industry



do figures such as Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner, Duncan Kenworthy... but hang on a minute. At this point I realise I'm going to upset too many by exclusion. And in any case, every person I've mentioned so far is a white male – and the inevitability of that sort of bias is only slightly ameliorated by the presence of Anne Morrison as chair of Bafta and our own Amanda Nevill as CEO of the BFI, the two most important film bodies.

Anxiety about diversity is perhaps one reason why the role hasn't been filled. We're a long way from being in a position where a Lenny Henry or an Idris Elba can represent the entire British Film industry – it's proving hard enough for them to promote the diversity cause itself. Another reason might be that British film is doing very well thank you very much without an Attenborough-like figure. But this may be a short-sighted view. Brit film is notoriously subject to waves of boom being followed by troughs of bust. These are times when no elected government, whatever its political provenance, is likely to increase the financial help the film industry gets. If British film gets in real trouble again, its representatives will likely meet hearts of stone everywhere, not least among the public.

Which makes me think back a-ways to 2013, when HM the Queen was awarded a special Bafta at Windsor Castle. Who did the industry turn to, to present the award in the absence of Attenborough? Why, it was Kenneth Branagh, at one time the most obvious Attenborough-like figure Britain had in waiting. Today he is, of course, a very busy man: directing the likes of *Thor* and *Cinderella* and acting in the final series of the British version of *Wallander*; and he's also no longer so publicly present in arts politics. He's probably happier that way. Let's hope we won't need him. ☹

i Join the *Sight & Sound* editorial team on Monday 15 September at 18.30 in the BFI Reuben Library at BFI Southbank, London, for a discussion about the magazine and the state of film writing today, 'Inside *Sight & Sound*'. Details and bookings at <https://whatson.bfi.org.uk/Online/insidesightandsound>

IN THE FRAME

LONDON CALLING



Portrait of the artist: Timothy Spall in Mike Leigh's *Mr. Turner*

With the BFI London Film Festival looming, we offer a few tips to help guide you through the maze of great films on offer

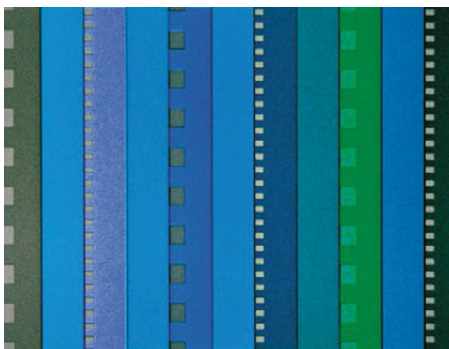
By Isabel Stevens

Autumn is coming and, for those in and around London, that means one thing: poring over the LFF catalogue and deciding which of the hundreds of films on show should be top of their list when the booking scramble starts. It's not easy trying to fathom which films are for you, whether on the basis of the director's reputation, Cannes buzz, strand positioning, star dazzle, the catalogue description or even the film's title or illustrating still. We here at *Sight & Sound* are hoping to save you some time with our own recommendations of the films we've been particularly taken with (a full list of which will be available soon on our website).

We're proud to announce that Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Winter Sleep* is this year's *Sight & Sound* gala film. The Turkish director deservedly won the Palme d'Or for this Chekhovian chamber drama, his seventh feature. Ceylan's previous, the existential crime saga *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (2011), introduced more dialogue into his predominantly visual, minimalist style of storytelling, and *Winter Sleep* continues this trend. Aydin (Haluk Bilginer), a retired actor and wealthy landowner, lives with his young wife (Melisa Sözen) and his divorced sister (Demet Akbag) in his boutique hotel in the rugged, snowy hinterland of Cappadocia (which Ceylan snatches through the hotel's windows in the kind of desolately sublime shot that is his signature). The film's slow-burning drama evolves from an enigmatic incident at the start when a local boy shatters Aydin's car window with a rock. It transpires that the boy is angry because Aydin has set debt-collectors on to his family for not paying their rent on time. The act unsettles Aydin's relationships with his wife and sister and Ceylan observes the fallout through long, deftly scripted conversations that disintegrate into bouts of emotional warfare and self-reflection, given real intensity by some outstanding performances from Ceylan's actors. The wreckage of failed and failing relationships is strewn across Ceylan's cinema, which has also never been shy of examining the cruel side of human nature. He

Encounters

The festival of short film and animation has a typically eclectic line-up for its 20th edition, from Philip Jeck and Lol Sargent's 'Vinyl Requiem (Replayed)' to a programme exploring the work of Norman McLaren (including 'Synchrony', right) and his legacy. Bristol, 16-21 September.



Withnail and I

"As funny as cancer" was how Bruce Robinson's production company regarded his cult 1987 road movie (right) about two wasted drifters. Proving them wrong yet again, and preserving Withnail's elegant drunken prose for future generations to commit to memory, is Arrow Films' Blu-ray and DVD restoration, complete with reams of extras and also available in a limited-edition hardback book package.



ON OUR
RADAR



Once upon a time in Cappadocia: Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Winter Sleep*

has described filmmaking as “sending a letter to the darkness” and that’s certainly the case in this morally knotty and complex psychological study.

The LFF’s trump card is that it caters to the broadest possible tastes, from artists’ films to early cinema – this year’s archive gala being *The Battles of Coronel and Falkland Islands* (1927), a highly authentic depiction of WW1 naval warfare, restored and accompanied by a new score by composer Simon Dobson. Those who like to mix their premieres with older films won’t be disappointed with pristine new restorations of classics such as John Ford’s poetic, magisterial *My Darling Clementine* (1946), King Hu’s balletic *wu xia* swordplay epic *Dragon Inn* (1967), Powell and Pressburger’s *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951) and Sergei Parajanov’s unclassifiable masterpiece *The Colour of Pomegranates* (1968) as well as revivals of lesser-known but vital titles like Charles B. Pierce’s proto-slasher movie *The Town that Dreaded Sundown* (1976).

Prestige British drama is represented by, among others, Benedict Cumberbatch’s turn as wartime code-breaker Alan Turing in *The Imitation Game* and Mike Leigh’s biopic *Mr. Turner*. Timothy Spall’s grunting and growling Romantic painter is unmissable, as are Leigh’s cinematic renderings of Turner’s landscapes. Those interested in art can also indulge in American documentarian Frederick Wiseman’s tour of London’s National Gallery, and Randall Wright’s portrait, *David Hockney: A Life in Pictures*.

American independent cinema makes a strong showing this year, with second-time directors Damien Chazelle (with his exuberant jazz-drumming drama *Whiplash*) and David Robert Mitchell (with his atmospheric lo-fi horror

It Follows) delivering on the promise of their debuts. Acquaint yourself with up-and-coming female directors such as Céline Sciamma and Alice Rohrwacher, who both offer intimate coming-of-age tales in *Girlhood* and *The Wonders*, respectively. Despite the civil war raging, Ukrainian cinema is as imaginative and stylistically bold as ever, judging by Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy’s feature debut, *The Tribe*, told entirely in unsubtitled sign language and Sergei Loznitsa’s documentary *Maidan*, surveying the anti-government protests in Kiev over a 90-day period solely through static shots. The most timely feature in the programme, given the current situation in the Middle East, is undoubtedly Abderrahmane Sissako’s *Timbuktu*, an ever-imaginative and visually arresting rallying cry against Islamic fundamentalism. Unfairly ignored by the Cannes prize-givers, here’s hoping it fares better in the LFF competition.

With theatrical distribution in the UK ever skewed towards English-language or European cinema, the LFF offers a vital opportunity to sample the work of lesser-known filmmakers from around the world, from Kim Seong-hun’s genre-reinvigorating blackmail thriller *A Hard Day* to Gabriel Mascaro’s tale about death and loss in a remote Brazilian village, *August Winds* (see page 54). Cinema only takes over London once a year, so don’t miss out on those smaller films that you might not get a chance to see on the big screen again. 📺

i The 58th BFI London Film Festival, in partnership with American Express, runs from 8-19 October. The *Sight & Sound Winter Sleep* gala takes place on Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 October

LISTOMANIA HOLLYWOOD SATIRES

As Cronenberg’s *Maps to the Stars* arrives in UK cinemas, we choose the best films that take aim at the vanity and absurdity of Tinseltown

- 1 **Show People** (1928)
King Vidor
- 2 **What Price Hollywood?** (1932)
George Cukor
- 3 **Sullivan’s Travels** (1941)
Preston Sturges
- 4 **S.O.B.** (1981)
Blake Edwards
- 5 **Barton Fink** (1991)
Joel Coen, Ethan Coen
- 6 **The Player** (1992)
Robert Altman
- 7 **Bowfinger** (1999)
Frank Oz
- 8 **Bamboozled** (2000)
Spike Lee
- 9 **State and Main** (2000)
David Mamet
- 10 **For Your Consideration** (2006)
Christopher Guest



QUOTE OF THE MONTH ROBERT BRESSON

‘My movie is born first in my head, dies on paper, is resuscitated by the living persons and real objects I use, which are killed on film but, placed in a certain order and projected on to a screen, come to life again like flowers in water’



Safar Festival

The best of popular new Arab cinema sits alongside classic titles from the Arab world, in a festival that boasts the UK premiere of ‘Rock the Casbah’, (right) by Moroccan filmmaker Laïla Marrakchi and starring her and Omar Sharif. ICA, London, 19-25 September.



Berwick Film Festival

A highlight of the upcoming festival is the premiere of ‘The Twilight State’ (below), by US-based Ben Russell, co-commissioned by Northern Film and Media. 17-21 September, see www.berwickfilm-artsfest.com for full details.



Scalarama

There are treats galore in this year’s Scalarama, which is becoming one of the highlights of the UK film calendar. Titles include John Waters’s ‘Polyester’ (below), complete with ‘Odorama’ scratch ‘n’ sniff cards, Béla Tarr’s ‘Sátántangó’ on 35mm, and ‘The Visitor’, starring Sam Peckinpah. Venues across the UK, 1-30 September. See www.scalarama.com for full details.



A SHOW OF HANDS

Dead hands on screen often appear to be more than mere flesh and bone, retaining sensual vestiges of their erstwhile owners



By Hannah McGill

It might have been the influence of *The Addams Family*, but I clearly recall as a young child being preoccupied with whether I

would recognise my own hand if it should happen to be separated from my body and returned to me. Our hands possess marks of our identities – fingerprints, engagement and wedding rings – and yet seem, with the degree of movement of which they are capable, and the extent to which their structure can be made to mimic that of a scuttling quadruped, creepily close to having a life of their own as well.

Margaret Atwood mocks the trope of the independent disembodied hand in a recent short story, *The Dead Hand Loves You*: her vengeful and romantic hand, the subject of a tacky horror novel and two film adaptations, becomes the preoccupation of Freudians, Jungians, film critics and other solemn bores, who squabble over whether it signifies the return of the repressed or the Hand of Glory.

Freud, predictably, linked severed hands in dreams and myth to fear of castration; but the glee with which it scuttles through horror history suggests that it offers a more fun fantasy than that. Hands unyoked from their owners have a tendency to do – or at least to represent – the forbidden. In *The Hands of Orlac* (1924), and its many subsequent remakes and imitators, a concert pianist becomes convinced following a double hand transplant that he has taken on his donor's murderous tendencies. (Interestingly, the original film caused unease when it was released in its native Germany because it was thought to give too much away to criminals about the process of fingerprinting.) The idea is taken further in *The Beast with Five Fingers* (1946), in which, apparently, the hand of a murdered musician independently seeks vengeance for his death. And the dead hand can even be lovable: *The Addams Family's* Thing serves the family and displays no particularly malevolent intent. The notion of something with all of the dexterity of a human hand but none of the encumbrances of a body or a brain is strangely seductive – and even poignant.

Dead hands often appear to be more than mere tissue and bone; they seem imbued with the sensual lives of their erstwhile owners. The pair of severed hands that first mate Père Jules keeps in his quarters in Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934) may stay safely in their jar, but they still transmit a powerful intrigue and unease. Along with the other curios that choke Jules's living space, the hands illustrate the film's interest in the functions and boundaries of the body, and as such pay aesthetic homage to the surrealists and their preoccupation with severed body parts and objects uncannily separated from their function.

But the presence of the hands and the brief



A safe pair of hands: Dita Parlo as Juliette in Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934)

explanation Jules gives of their provenance also illustrate tensions that exist throughout *L'Atalante*: between adherence to duty and abandonment to pleasure, manual work and creativity, instinct and social stricture, conventional and subversive sexuality. The hands, Jules says, belonged to a friend, of whom he also keeps a photograph; "They're all I have left of him," he says, allowing the interpretation that he once had rather more.

The clutched hands in the jar are prefigured in the film's opening sequence, when Jules

holds the hand of his cabin boy to rush him to Juliette's wedding to Jean, the captain of the barge. Whether romantic or merely avuncular, this male hand-holding is an early signal that sexuality and gender roles will be unusually fluid in this story. But the film presents socially sanctioned heterosexual married love as no less complex, secretive or erotic than whatever lurks in Jules's chequered history of male 'friends' and female lovers.

By commencing where many films conclude



The Hands of Orlac (1924)



The Addams Family (1991)



The pair of severed hands Père Jules keeps in 'L'Atalante' may stay safely in their jar, but they still transmit intrigue and unease

– with a marriage – *L'Atalante* deals not with the first flush of love, but with the faltering first phase of happily ever after, when bedsheets must be changed, flaws acknowledged and sexual passion to some extent contained. Perhaps Juliette's alarm at the sight of the hands is the beginning of what the rest of the film's narrative will teach her: that true love entails the sacrifice of parts of oneself.

When petty disagreements separate them for a night, Juliette and Jean are romantically reunited by a love scene that cuts between them experiencing auto-erotic reveries while thinking of one another: the body of each is animated by the imagined other, and satisfaction pursued via a disembodied union. Bodily togetherness is but one facet of intimacy; severance has transformative possibilities too, and hands, as when a charming magician dazzles Juliette with his tricks, can trigger bliss all on their own. ☺

BEI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (6)

THE FIVE KEY...

FRANCESCO ROSI FILMS

On the eve of the rerelease of *Salvatore Giuliano*, we choose the major works from a towering figure in post-war Italian cinema



By Pasquale Iannone

Born in 1922, the Neapolitan filmmaker Francesco Rosi served an apprenticeship of more than ten years – including as

assistant to Luchino Visconti – before making his feature debut with Naples-set crime drama *The Challenge* in 1958. Rosi would become best-known for his films about the Italian south – *Le mani sulla città* (1963), *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1979) – and his investigations into real-life figures, such as the Sicilian bandit Salvatore Giuliano and the Italian-American gangster Charles 'Lucky' Luciano.



2 *Le mani sulla città* (1963)

Edoardo Gattopardo (Rod Steiger), an unscrupulous Neapolitan property developer with political aspirations, finds himself under suspicion when an apartment block collapses, leaving two people dead. Rosi was determined to expose corruption among those in power in his hometown and he would revisit the film, as well as some of the issues it raised, in his 1992 documentary *Neapolitan Diary*.



4 *The Mattei Affair* (1972)

Rosi's eighth feature tells of the life and death of Enrico Mattei, the president of then-state-owned oil company ENI and one of Italy's most powerful businessmen. The director's approach is similar to *Salvatore Giuliano* in terms of structure, though Mattei himself (played brilliantly by Rosi favourite Gian Maria Volonté) is far more of an on-screen presence than Giuliano in the earlier film.



1 *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962)

Beginning with the discovery of the titular bandit's dead body in July 1950, Rosi winds back to examine Giuliano's seven-year reign in Sicily and his links with the Mafia, police and politicians. Far from a conventional biopic (Giuliano himself is only rarely glimpsed), the film is as daring in its non-linear storytelling as the work of Rosi's contemporaries Federico Fellini and Alain Resnais.



3 *Many Wars Ago* (1970)

After a frustrating experience working with the influential Italian producer Carlo Ponti on the 1967 historical picture *More Than a Miracle*, Rosi returned to *engagé* filmmaking with an adaptation of Emilio Lussu's memoir of World War I *A Soldier on the Southern Front* (1938). The film allowed Rosi to underline the senselessness of war at a time when conflict was raging in Vietnam.



5 *Illustrious Corpses* (1976)

Since the mid-60s, the works of Sicilian novelist and playwright Leonardo Sciascia have been brought to the screen by filmmakers such as Elio Petri, Damiano Damiani and Gianni Amelio. In 1976, Rosi adapted Sciascia's novel *Equal Danger* and crafted a gripping thriller starring Lino Ventura as a detective investigating the murders of prominent judges against a backdrop of strikes and political unrest.

UNCONTROLLED DISSENT

In the face of arrest, travel bans and censorship, the Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof remains determined to provoke

By Ehsan Khoshbakht

In 1998, during a short period of relative press freedom in Iran, newspapers uncovered the terrifying story of more than 80 political assassinations carried out since the late 1980s, which became known as the Chain Murders. The victims were intellectuals, including writers, translators and political activists. After the story broke, pressure mounted on the Islamic Republic government, leading to an inquiry. The assassins were officially identified as staff of the Ministry of Intelligence, who were said to have committed the murders “under the influence of undercover rogue agents”.

Manuscripts Don't Burn, the latest film by Mohammad Rasoulof, takes these crimes – about which there is still widespread uncertainty – as its basis, following two Iranian government agents assigned to kidnap, interrogate and kill a dissident author. To call the film ‘brave’ or ‘shocking’ would be to understate the artistic and personal risks involved for Rasoulof, who is still due to serve a one-year prison sentence, having been arrested and briefly imprisoned in 2010 for filming without a permit.

“I was hesitant about making it,” Rasoulof says. “I put all of my energy into the production, but I couldn’t do my job as a director freely. During filming I occasionally grabbed my assistant, shouting, ‘I’m scared shitless.’”

In recent years the filmmaker has been living with his family in Hamburg, but in 2013 his passport was confiscated when he travelled to Iran, preventing him from leaving. He only returned to Germany two months ago.

“Half of the film was shot in Iran and the other half outside. The first time I returned to Iran to shoot the film, my actors balked. I missed the chance for a winter shoot and had to wait another year. A simple sequence like Kian [the dissident author’s trusted colleague] walking from the car to the flat was done in five different locations and two different countries. I wanted to make sure that I could put these two distinct parts together seamlessly.”

Rasoulof’s first feature *The Twilight* (2002) was praised by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance-approved Fajr International Film Festival, but the director rejected the offer of a handsome government budget to make a follow-up. The script for his next film, *Iron Island* (2005) – a richly metaphorical work about contemporary Iran set on board a decommissioned, slowly sinking tanker – was reported to officials during production. The film was judged subversive and banned – as have been all his films since.

After the mass protests that followed the presidential election of 2009, Rasoulof shifted toward a more directly political filmmaking style. The following year, while working on a film in response to the election, he was arrested and charged, alongside the director Jafar Panahi (whose subsequent house-arrest was the subject



Assassin's creed: *Manuscripts Don't Burn*

of his 2011 documentary *This Is Not a Film*). That put him in the international media spotlight; but he is wary of the effect of such attention on the reception of Iranian cinema. “In an enclosed society, cinema becomes news media. A film from Iran, because it’s made under unusual circumstances and censored, is largely appreciated for reasons of curiosity: people outside Iran want to know what’s happening inside. The cinematic merit is of secondary concern.”

Aware that any interest in his art arising from those events was likely to be fleeting, Rasoulof resolved to stay true to his creative and political imperatives. *Manuscripts*, which premiered at Cannes last year, arose from a need to address unanswered questions thrown up by the Chain Murders. “It’s the only film production, I think, in which the make-up on the filmmaker was heavier than that of the actors. I was afraid someone would recognise me in the street. When I look at the pictures from Cannes, it looks like I’ve come out of a grinder; all beat and shattered.”

The film humanises its bleak tale by focusing on one of the assassins, whose gruesome duties

contrast with his worries about his hospitalised son and his efforts to raise money for medical fees. “I didn’t want it to be black and white, to show the men as being totally brainwashed,” Rasoulof says. The assassins were partly inspired by his own prison interrogators. “I could see that some of these men do not believe in what they do and have built this wall between their professional and private lives. What distinguishes such people is that they never question their responsibility for the acts. It is Arendt’s ‘banality of evil’.” Once I bumped into one of my interrogators in a grocery shop and it was him who had to escape from me.”

In real life, the alleged mastermind behind the Chain Murders committed suicide in prison, taking many state secrets to his grave, while the journalists who exposed the murders were imprisoned for supposedly unrelated reasons – one, Saeed Hajjarian, was shot in the head in March 2000 and paralysed. Rasoulof omits this aftermath.

“What we see is connected to real events but not the whole truth. I prepared an explanatory note for the end, but I left it out. By including it I’d have claimed that it was true in every aspect, which isn’t the case.”

In spite of his experiences with the authorities, Rasoulof is soon bound for Iran again to begin production on a new film. “My life and work are in Iran. My cultural relation to everything, from doors and walls to problems and miseries, comes from Iran – from the language. This is not the language of, ‘Hello, I need this or that,’ it is something more profound, with which one thinks. These thoughts become your country. My country is my language. When I’m outside Iran, I’m comfortable and unhappy. When I’m inside, I’m uncomfortable but happy.”

Facing this existential dilemma, Rasoulof remains a provocative filmmaker. The political anxiety that continues to shape his work has the power to shake us too. **8**

i *Manuscripts Don't Burn* is released on 12 September and will be reviewed in the next issue

When I'm outside Iran, I'm comfortable and unhappy. When I'm inside, I'm uncomfortable but happy



Mohammad Rasoulof

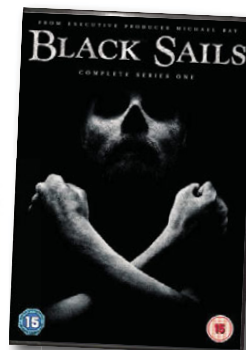
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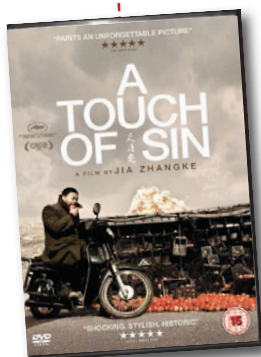


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FESTIVAL EXPRESS



The Traverse City Film Festival has not only been a boon to the local economy, it's shown the enduring public hunger that exists for cinema



By Mark Cousins

In the first third of the 20th century, cities were cinema'd. In the last third, they were de-cinema'd. This is the story of one that

has re-cinema'd. A return of the repressed.

The US state of Michigan is best known for its motors and for Detroit, its motor town, its Motown. Politically it's on a knife edge. Half the state is forest. People hunt and fish and, in the dark months, lake-effect snow winters everything.

Upstate is Traverse City, famed for its cherries, water sports and tourism. It's clean and tranquil and, at night, if you have a dark side, maybe a bit Lynchian. Women outnumber men. Its jewel art-deco State Theatre was long shuttered, like Peter Bogdanovich's *Last Picture Show*, but ten years ago filmmaker Michael Moore and others co-founded the Traverse City Film Festival (TCFF), and decided that the State should be its centrepiece.

I first saw the State in 2012, when Moore invited me to the TCFF to show *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*. The festival and the community had beautifully restored the building; watching films in it was like going to a movie in the 1940s (and some of the cinema's movie tickets cost year-round what they did in 1940 – 25¢). I was struck by how distinctive TCFF is. Where some festivals parachute into a town, this one is of and by the community. The volunteers are legion, their hospitality off the scale. Many of the films have social justice themes, but

there's plenty of experimental stuff – Dietrich Brüggemann's *Stations of the Cross* won the Stanley Kubrick prize this year – and bags of cinephilia. Moore is a movie nut in the Scorsese mould.

The second year I went, they showed my two films about children, one in their lovely new Bijou theatre, a work-in-progress mini-State in parkland by the beach. I went to see 'Mike's Surprise', which turned out to be Moore hosting a two-hour chat show, in which he interviewed board members Larry Charles (*Seinfeld*, the Sacha Baron Cohen films), Terry George (*Some Mother's Son*, *Hotel Rwanda*) and Tia Lessin (*Behind the Labels*, co-producer of Michael Moore films), and which culminated in the audience of 500 going for a walk with Moore. I go to dozens of film festivals each year, but such events make this one different – grounded, ludic, centred on Moore himself, his taste and values, along with those of his executive director, Deb Lake. I've long argued that film festivals should be authored. Traverse City is an auteur festival.

Then Moore asked me to join his board, so I got to see behind the scenes. There's no government support for the digitising of specialist cinemas in the US, so funds had been privately raised for the State. The city's street scene has been revived. As a result of the festival, real-estate values have increased, which has increased tax revenues for the city, so facilities have improved. I on purpose took my lanyard off and chatted to non-festival goers in local bars. I encountered no cynicism, just relief that things are happening again in the city.

Michael Moore is one of the most famous men

Traverse City is famed for its cherries and water sports and tourism. It's clean, tranquil and, at night, maybe a bit Lynchian

in America, and regularly vilified on Fox news and elsewhere (the latest fiction is that he has nine homes), but he is really admired there, like Sean Connery is admired in Scotland. People sometimes say to him, "I don't agree with your politics, but I like what you've done for Traverse City," without realising that it is his politics that led him, in the first place, to make innovative community events at largely affordable prices.

Of course we're familiar with the Bilbao effect, where social uplift results from a landmark culture building, but the Traverse City model is perhaps more striking because, in private property, corporately sponsored America, it is so clearly communal, and it doesn't seek corporate support – no Bud Light, no Pepsi. The festival is now advising other US cities on how to adopt its approach, and Moore recently donated the last \$250,000 of profits from *Roger & Me* to help connect independent cinemas across the US so that they can, using the live-opera model, do simultaneous screenings of foreign and indie movies, and Q&A sessions. This might sound like no big deal in the UK, where such things are already done by the Picturehouse chain and others, but the US is rougher terrain for such riding.

And my bigger point is not about the social impact – though that's great. It's the question of why cinema is coming back to cities like Traverse. The answer, I think, is simple: people love films. When the movie theatres closed down, a hunger was left unfed. It's not just that, in the first half of the 20th century, we got addicted to a new drug and then got withdrawal. It's more like we had ancient desires – to look at up at something big and luminous, to experience the rapture of self-loss, to be told vivid visual stories – which formed in the Pleistocene epoch. In this sense, cinema is as old as that epoch. It just took a while for the medium that would satisfy it to be born. ☺

DEVELOPMENT TALE

PRIDE



Fight the power: one of the challenges of *Pride* was that the period setting and scale of the story meant an ultra-low budget was not an option

The tale of an unlikely partnership between striking miners and gay activists only came to fruition after years chipping away at the coalface

By Charles Gant

Stephen Beresford was barely out of drama school when he first heard the true story that would, 20 years later, form the basis of his first produced screenplay. An older gay man was taking him to task for the lack of political engagement of the younger generation, and saying that more should be done to support Britain's miners, at the time facing yet another round of pit closures.

"And my answer was, 'Why should gay people support the miners? They don't support us,'" says Beresford. "I basically felt what a lot of gay people feel, I think: which is that gay people generally leave or are thrown out of working-class communities. And they never go back.' And the person I was talking to then said, 'Well, let me tell you this story...'"

The account that unfolded was about Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, the group that during the 1984-85 miners' strike raised funds for the strikers, uniting two disparate communities, both feeling victimised by Margaret Thatcher's

Conservative government. "I know this sounds completely made up," Beresford says, "but absolutely in that second, I remember thinking, 'I'll write that as a film one day.'"

Beresford started writing professionally, beginning with a script for his friend and fellow former RADA student Andrew Lincoln. Through Tiger Aspect, he then successfully pitched a new comedy-drama series *How to Be a Happy Homosexual*, and delivered the first two episodes to Channel 4. But nothing ever got made.

Over the years, in meetings with producers and commissioners, Beresford would bring up his LGSM idea, but was met with blanket discouragement. "Even today, if you say to somebody, 'It's a story about gay activists and trade unionism,' they don't say, 'Where do I sign? Let me get my chequebook.'" One producer suggested it might work as a low-budget drama-doc for TV. Another suggested a radio play.

Yet another – who worked in development for a company that makes both television and film – said, "Yeah, but Steve, what stops this being just another shit British film?" Says Beresford, "I remember thinking, if that's a question we ask, what kind of a fucking industry is this? I was like, 'Well, I wouldn't write it shit. We wouldn't get any shit actors. We'd try and get a not-shit director. We'd just generally try not to be shit.'"

One of the challenges the project faced was that the period setting and scale of the story meant an ultra-low-budget was not an option. And, in any case, Beresford wasn't interested. "I always felt absolutely determined that the film should be positioned, and made and seen, as a big mainstream film. It wasn't that I wanted to position myself in the most commercially powerful position. It was that this material, to me, it really belonged in that arena. The obvious place to do it is to do a gay movie in inverted commas, an arthouse version that's going to be seen by 100,000 people at gay and lesbian film festivals, made on a shoestring. And that seemed to me the absolute opposite of what it should be. I felt it should be something that straight people go and see in towns where there are no gay bars."

When Beresford's debut stageplay, *The Last of the Haussmans*, was announced for the National Theatre's Lyttelton stage, starring Julie Walters and Rory Kinnear, buzz on the writer grew. One industry professional who asked to meet him was David Livingstone, former marketing boss for Working Title Films, and now attempting to break out into film production. Livingstone pitched what Beresford now calls "perfectly pleasant romantic comedies and film ideas" and the two men got on, but nothing gelled. "It ended with an 'OK, let's keep thinking and

talking.' And I had my coat on and the door open, and he said, 'Anything else? Any other stories you're burning to tell?' It was that sentence that unlocked *Pride* again, which by now had been buried under neolithic layers of fossilised rejection. I said this one thing, which is the best thing you can say in a pitch: 'Well, there is this one story. No one will ever make it.' That appealed to his vanity. Everyone wants to think they're different, particularly in film. And he said, 'Well, I might. Tell me it.'

Livingstone bought the pitch in the room. With his discretionary fund from Working Title, he commissioned the script then and there, sending Beresford off on a period of research, meeting many of the original LGSM members, as well as the Welsh miners and supporters who became friends with the gay activists. Crucial was the support of Mike Jackson (played in the film by Joe Gilgun), who had kept an extensive archive on the LGSM movement. But it transpired that Beresford was not the first writer to approach him.

"Quite a few people had knocked on the door and said, 'I want to tell the story of LGSM.' Whether it was a film, play or kabuki opera, whatever it was, he'd tell them the story and show them the archive, and they'd go away and he'd never hear from them again and it would never happen. So I would say Mike was generously wary. But he told me everything he could."

After Beresford turned in his first draft, it soon became apparent that Working Title

I always felt absolutely determined that the film should be positioned, and made and seen, as a big mainstream film

would not be the right home for the project, so Livingstone took it to Cameron McCracken at Pathé. It proved an instant sell. As Livingstone recalls, "I said, 'Do you like it?' 'Yeah, I love it' And I said, 'Love it and good luck with it or love it and want it?' He said, 'Love it and want it.'" The film was then fully financed with Pathé, BBC Films and the British Film Institute, with acclaimed theatre director Matthew Warchus (who hadn't made a film since his misfiring 1999 debut *Simpatico*) on board to direct.

As the film neared its October shoot date – the production had to wait nine months for Warchus, who was busy with the Broadway transfer of his smash-hit musical *Matilda* – concerns about the budget surfaced. Beresford says, "It has an enormous number of speaking parts, I think it's 82 or 92, and a huge number of big set pieces. People would say, 'You've got to cut stuff. You've got to compromise.' It tended to be a slight battle. I would look at the extras and say, we could save money on that. For example, the line producer would see a scene set in a gay bar, and budget for 150 supporting artists. And I would say, 150 people in a gay bar in 1985 was a riot. There would be nine people, and one would be a lesbian, and she'd be playing darts. You can really bring the costs down. It's just not how things were." 

 ***Pride* is released in UK cinemas on 12 September and is reviewed on page 60**

THE NUMBERS MUSIC EVENT CINEMA

By Charles Gant

God Help the Girl, the debut feature from Belle and Sebastian's Stuart Murdoch, may not suggest itself as a significant success story. Receiving decidedly mixed reviews, the film was perhaps best appreciated by those who loved the 2009 studio album of the same name, whose songs feature prominently in the romantic musical drama.

God Help the Girl has also produced patchy box-office numbers, at least if you only look at the figures for the proper cinema release, beginning on 22 August. But broaden your view to include the special-event preview that occurred on the Saturday prior to release, and the picture brightens considerably. On that day, the film, accompanied by a live Belle and Sebastian performance beamed by satellite from Edinburgh's Corn Exchange, grossed a handy £112,000. When you look at the vanishingly small grosses for a range of low-budget British films this summer (see chart, right), suddenly the *God Help the Girl*'s numbers look enviably robust.

Distributor Metrodome acquired the title for the UK at script stage and, says head of theatrical Damian Spandley, "I've no doubt that the connection with the band was uppermost in people's minds." The event-driven release strategy was not in place at the time of acquisition, but Picturehouse's presentation of Shane Meadows's *Stone Roses* documentary in June 2013 – "a very important event that definitely caught the imagination of the UK distribution community," Spandley says – demonstrated how a band's fanbase could be leveraged for a film, if a suitably engaging live happening was offered as part of the package.

In fact, the live component for the premiere of *The Stone Roses: Made of Stone* was a post-screening Q&A with Meadows, but the presence of the band at Manchester's Victoria Warehouse to introduce the film was enough to engage audience interest. Satellite-beamed premieres for the documentaries *Pulp: A Film About*

God Help the Girl



SELECTED BRITISH FILMS AT THE UK BOX OFFICE, SUMMER 2014

Film	Gross
God Help the Girl	£119,460
Lilting	£110,236
The Anomaly	£29,811
Downhill	£19,746
Keeping Rosy	£13,601
Believe	£6,546
Blackwood	£10,315
Love Me Till Monday	£3,854
Here and Now	£3,282
Benny & Jolene	£3,077

Life, Death and Supermarkets and *Mistaken for Strangers* (about The National), similarly hooked to talent Q&As, also delivered a significant chunk of overall UK box office for those films. How much bigger might the numbers have been with the bands actually performing live?

That question will be put to the test very soon – on 19 September Picturehouse releases 20,000 *Days on Earth*, following a gala preview two days before at the Barbican that will include a live performance by Nick Cave and collaborators, as well as a Q&A with the creative team, all beamed into 150 cinemas. On 3 October Metrodome releases the Spandau Ballet documentary *Soul Boys of the Western World*, preceded on 30 September by a live premiere beamed into 200 UK cinemas from London's Royal Albert Hall, with the band performing on stage. Spandley comments: "With the Spandau Ballet film, without this event we'd be looking at a maximum of 20 screens, competing in the same space with a lot of other stuff. While the band playing live might be the driver for ticket sales, especially for audiences at the Royal Albert Hall itself, we think that the film is strong enough for people to come away talking about it afterwards." 

FILMS WITH MUSIC EVENTS AT THE UK BOX OFFICE

Film	Event gross	Total gross
The Stone Roses: Made of Stone	£254,188	£519,000
God Help the Girl	£111,790	£119,460*
Pulp: A Film About Life, Death and Supermarkets	£68,352	£75,339
Shut Up and Play the Hits	£54,731	£68,219
Mistaken for Strangers	£30,680	£57,171

*gross after 3 days

LAUGHING TO THE BANK

BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS

What does the success of *The Inbetweeners* films mean for the more commercially challenging work for which Film4 is known?



By Ben Roberts

One of the questions I was asked when I was interviewed for my job at the BFI was: "Would you have invested in *The Inbetweeners*

Movie?" Given the make-up of that particular panel, I wasn't sure if there was a right answer...

The previous summer *The Inbetweeners* had broken records (best weekend opening for a comedy, and best for a British independent film) on its way to £42 million at the box office, grabbing a huge young audience generally more inclined towards (and better served by) Hollywood – and it was produced for peanuts, to boot. That success prompted a fresh debate about the kinds of film we could and should be making in the UK, and what to fund with public money.

My answer was that I was pretty sure they never needed Lottery money. Before the BFI I worked at Protagonist Pictures: while we were finding our feet we were given office space by Channel 4 (one of our shareholders) and made friends with the home entertainment department. A couple of years later they asked us to look at the script for *The Inbetweeners Movie* (which arrived with the kind of security you'd expect for *Star Wars*), to judge the project's international value; that gave us a good view of their finance plan.

The film needed to be in production within months, so it could hit the cinemas in the summer and the DVD could be out for Christmas. The TV series had been a smash for 4DVD, and based on what they knew of their box-set results, and what they could safely forecast for a movie's home video release, they could greenlight and finance a feature. A number of UK distributors had lined up to handle the theatrical release for a fee, and Channel 4 would get an early broadcast date. It was a big investment for the DVD team but a pretty safe bet, and one that will have paid out.

Who knows if we – the BFI – would have supported it based purely on the material, but there is every reason why we should and would. To be hypercritical, I thought the script was overlong and didn't do anything that *Kevin & Perry* hadn't when they went large. But it was as filthy, funny and sharp as the Bafta-winning writing on the show, and had a balls-out confidence that is rare, particularly in comedy. It also benefited from characters who had grown into themselves on TV, and came to the big screen fully formed and loved. (Last year we supported *Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa* for similar reasons, although Partridge's

You can't argue with a combined box office of £80 million-odd, let alone all that DVD and advertising revenue



The Inbetweeners 2

cultish appeal put a ceiling on its potential.)

Fast forward, and now *The Inbetweeners 2* has opened even better and might outperform the first, when industry wisdom had pegged it to do rather less. It shared the summer with several duff TV spin-offs (*Postman Pat: The Movie*, *Mrs. Brown's Boys D'Movie*, *Pudsey the Dog: The Movie*), and while some are going to be alienated by all those 'clunge' references, it's by most critical accounts a superior sequel; I'd say the *Inbetweeners* movies are the closest we've come to some of the *Saturday Night Live* films – not quite up there with *Wayne's World*, but maybe *Wayne's World 2*.

The Inbetweeners 2 arrived in cinemas only days after Film4 – foster parent to both films – announced that ex-Universal International boss David Kosse would fill the shoes of the departing Tessa Ross, an appointment many have taken as a clear signal of Channel 4's desire to nudge the film unit in a more commercial direction.

You can't argue with a combined box office of £80 million-odd, let alone all that DVD and advertising revenue, and I'm sure Kosse will be encouraged to find other material from the channels with big enough shoulders for a feature (a *Skins* film was written but never surfaced). The question on everyone's lips is what this means for the risky and more commercially challenging material for which Film4 is known and admired.

I had written previously in these pages that I thought C4 chief David Abraham was likely to seek out someone who would take a more enthusiastic, or at least pragmatic, approach to the channel's commercial ambitions; Kosse is certainly that. But he is also someone who, in my experience from working with him at Universal, enjoys teaming up with the best filmmakers, and likes to take some risks to get to the best material. He took on the UK rights to Lone Scherfig's *The Riot Club* (also on our Film Fund slate) and mostly financed Alex Garland's upcoming directing sci-fi debut, *Ex Machina* – both films that were co-developed at Film4, and that may point to his comfort zone.

My recollection is that he challenges his team on their decisions, but also hands them a lot of trust: I imagine his colleagues at Film4 will have the freedom to continue developing material on instinct. So I would be optimistic, even though I'm sure he would admit he has many new friends and acquaintances still to make. I'm really looking forward to working with him again. @bfiben

IN PRODUCTION

● **David Fincher** is to follow his forthcoming adaptation of *Gone Girl* with a reworking of the hit Channel 4 series *Utopia*. Fincher was of course behind the recent *House of Cards*, another US adaptation of a hit British series. Production on the ten-episode series is due to commence in January.

● **Brady Corbet**, the star of Antonio Campos's *Simon Killer*, is to make his directorial debut with *The Childhood of a Leader*, about the early years of a man who would go on to become a ruler after World War I, a story loosely inspired by the childhood experiences of a number of 20th-century dictators. Juliette Binoche was originally due to star, but has dropped out, to be replaced by Bérénice Bejo, alongside Robert Pattinson and Tim Roth.

● **Jonathan Romney**, writer/director of the short film *L'Assenza*, and a critic whose name will be familiar to any regular S&S reader, has co-written a feature entitled *History's Future* with Amsterdam-based artist and filmmaker Fiona Tan. Tan is to direct the project, which combines documentary footage with a fictional narrative about an amnesiac man on an odyssey. The cast includes Mark O'Halloran, Anne Consigny, Christos Passalis, Manjinder Virk, Johanna ter Steege and Denis Lavant.

● **Alfred Hitchcock and François Truffaut** recorded 26 hours of interviews for Truffaut's famous book on Hitch's work, but much of it had to be left out of the finished text. The extra material from their legendary 1962 encounter is to be drawn on for a new documentary, to be directed by the critic and programmer Kent Jones, and with contributions from the great and the good from Scorsese to Spielberg to the Dardennes.

● **Martin Scorsese** has been linked to a biopic about fellow native New Yorkers, The Ramones. The project is reportedly only in very early stages of development, and is yet to have a writer attached, but is apparently being readied for release in 2016, to mark the 40th anniversary of the band's first record.

● **Catherine Breillat** (below) is at work on her next project, *Bridge of Floating Dreams*, working from a script by Australian screenwriter Brian Jones. The film – Breillat's first English-language production – is set in mid-1960s Japan, and follows an Australian backpacker named Sean and a Japanese nightclub hostess named Miyoshi, as well as Sean's dealings with an Austrian forger and a Japanese yakuza hit man.





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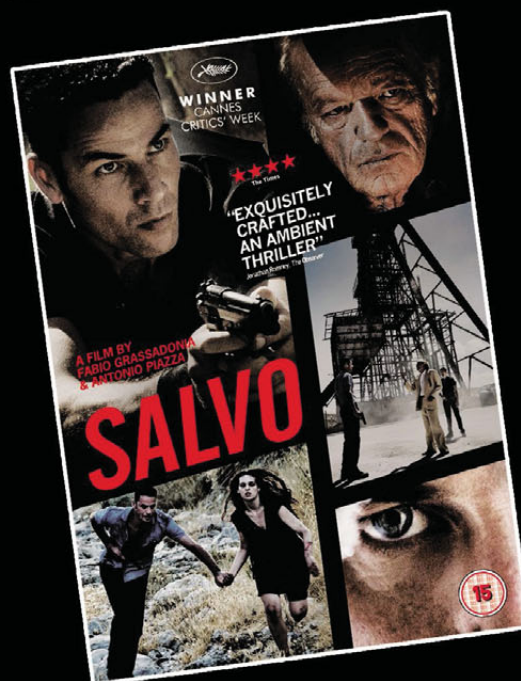


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DIRECTOR

ROBERT DREW 1924-2014

Pioneer of Direct Cinema and close observer of the realities of American political power in the era of JFK and Civil Rights

By Adam Nayman

"People who are trying to fool you always reveal that they're trying to fool you." So said Robert Drew in a 2008 interview, and while every documentary filmmaker probably fancies him or herself equipped with a working bullshit detector, it's arguable that the Ohio-born filmmaker, who died in July at the age of 90, was peerless at sniffing out the truth at any altitude – even in the rarefied air of the White House.

Drew's 1960 feature *Primary* was a double landmark: an unprecedented glimpse under the hood of the modern American political machine that was also a great technological leap forward for nonfiction filmmaking. A former combat pilot who turned to journalism after World War II (he barely made it back after surviving three months behind enemy lines), Drew was driven to combine traditional modes of reporting with a more pictorial sensibility – one that could locate a "dramatic logic in which things really happened".

That sense of drama is evident in every frame of *Primary*, which shadowed John F. Kennedy as he sought the 1960 Democratic presidential nomination. Handsome, articulate, and almost impossibly telegenic, JFK was the perfect new-style media star for a film that was itself a vanguard production: Drew and his crew – a kind of Murderer's Row of young directors including Richard Leacock, D.A. Pennebaker and Albert Maysles – developed a camera rigged for synchronous sound. Instead of plunking down with heavy equipment in the middle of a speech or rally, Drew was able to move at the same speed as his subjects, which was very quickly indeed: viewed more than 50 years later, *Primary* has a serene velocity unmatched by untold scores of shaky-cam imitators.

Claims that Drew invented Direct Cinema with *Primary* are difficult to assess – his Canadian counterpart Allan King was already directing documentaries for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that adopted a similarly agile and stripped-down aesthetic. It's more accurate to say that Drew, along with King and his own Drew Associates colleagues (and, a few years later, Frederick Wiseman), had a great influence on both the documentary fraternity and the film-going public, whose expectations of the artistic and entertainment value of nonfiction cinema had to be recalibrated amid the innovations of the mid-60s.

Where King and Wiseman manifested social and political commentary through studies of everyday subjects, Drew chose to remain a fly on the wall in the corridors of power: his most famous film after *Primary* is probably 1963's *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment*,



about Kennedy's response to the antics of the segregationist governor George Wallace, who had moved to block racial integration at the University of Alabama. Paced and structured as a thriller, the film used four camera crews to cover locations in Washington and Alabama, and its rhetorical perspective is similarly multifaceted. Without ever taking his eyes off the main players in the drama – including Robert Kennedy, giving his brother a run for his money in the matinee-idol politician sweepstakes – Drew sketches a larger picture of a country pushing through the pains of coming to terms with history, guilt, pride and prejudice. Reviewing the film in the *New York Times* in 2009, a few days before Barack Obama's inauguration, Fred Kaplan said it was the first film that the incoming commander-in-chief should watch in the White House screening room; as recent events in Missouri have proved, its portrait of an embattled chief executive trying to tread lightly along a racial fault-line does not lose relevance.

Almost all of Drew's work was for television, an arena that the filmmaker necessarily viewed with some ambivalence; after the success of *Primary*, he was hired to produce a series of what he called "candid dramas" for Time Inc and ABC, but only one cycle of shows ever made it to air. Critics have speculated that the problem was that Drew's chosen style threatened the primacy

of anchors and on-camera correspondents. News broadcasting was still overshadowed by the example of Edward R. Murrow, whose gravitas sometimes overwhelmed the story; Drew's self-effacement was somehow both completely of its moment and slightly ahead of its time. Still, Drew was able to work independently with various broadcasters for nearly 40 years, gradually expanding his range of topics to encompass the arts (films on Jane Fonda and ballet) and on-the-ground social realities (drug addiction and street gangs).

In the same interview where he spoke so proudly about his ability to spot falseness through his camera lens, Drew admitted that he felt disempowered in a 21st-century environment where political candidates exercise more scrupulous control over their own images than JFK ever did. "Everything is planned and plotted, and for somebody who wants to make candid films about what's really happening, that's impossible." That suggests Drew's real dilemma at this late stage in his career was not timorousness or lack of interest, but a recognition that the techniques he had pioneered to poke the surfaces of public life had been appropriated and modified to help hold the veil in place. The 'golden age of documentary' supposedly kicked off by the big box-office grosses of *Bowling for Columbine* and *Fahrenheit 9/11* – films that borrowed the fly-on-the-wall purview but also made sure that the baseball-cap wearing (gad)fly was front and centre for the camera and on the soundtrack – was no less compromised and problematic than the old days; maybe even more so. From the beginning of his remarkable career, and until the end, Robert Drew was nobody's fool. **S**

Drew had a great influence on the film-going public, whose expectations of nonfiction cinema had to be recalibrated

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FILMMAKER AND ARTIST

HARUN FAROCKI 1944-2014

German Marxist filmmaker who criticised the constraints Western society places on our bodies and our imaginations

By Nicole Brenez

Harun Farocki died on 30 July 2014 while he was resting in the sun after a swim.

For the last few years, along with his wife, the curator Antje Ehmann, he had travelled the world unceasingly, mounting exhibitions and installations on every continent, and teaching via his films, classes and workshops how better to understand the political functions and historical role of film.

Farocki was a filmmaker, a mixed media artist and a master of critical film theory, an intellectual heir of both Karl Marx and Jean-Luc Godard (the latter was the subject of a study he co-authored with the theorist Kaja Silverman – *Speaking about Godard*, 1998).

He was born in Sudetenland on 9 January 1944, to an Indian father and German mother, and spent his childhood in Indonesia. In the 1960s he studied cinema at the Deutschen Film- und Fernsehakademie in Berlin, where his classmates included Holger Meins, a future member of the Red Army Faction. At a festival in Knokke-le-Zoute in Belgium in 1967 they led an anti-Vietnam War protest that remains notorious. Farocki's first films were considered jewels of agitprop cinema: *The Words of the Chairman* (1967), *Their Newspapers* (1968 – an attack on the Springer publishing group) and *White Christmas* (1968 – Bing Crosby sings 'Peace on Earth' while Farocki reminds us of bombs raining down on Vietnam). The most famous is *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969) which juxtaposes activism and

performance: to show the effect of napalm on the human body, Farocki stubs out a cigarette on his arm. "One of the first punk films", he would say later, smiling. In this way he met history head on.

In his explorations of the specifics of his medium, Farocki places confrontation at the centre of his work, not only between individuals and movements in collective history, but between dominant representations and the critical analysis of images. *Industry and Photography* (1979), *Before Your Eyes – Vietnam* (1982), *An Image* (1984), *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988), *Still Life* (1997), *War at a Distance* (2003), *Respite* (2007)...

Farocki's work forges a critical history of visibility and denial. In 16mm, and later on video, through films and installations, Farocki waged a war of images, inventing ways of critically observing representations that utilise the images themselves.

His visual analysis erases any distinction between art and criticism. In his writings for the German magazine *Filmkritik*, in the soundtracks to his films, in his film essays and his installations based on 'soft montage' (his own term, which refers to working via succession and comparison – *Comparison via a third*, 2007): in all these forms, he keeps questioning the visual arsenal of ideology. In his approaches to everything from the political conditions surrounding the invention of cinema to the study of material culture, Farocki frequently revives the image of the grid by means of which society manages our everyday lives.

In 'Inextinguishable Fire', to show the effect of napalm on a human body, Farocki stubs out a cigarette on his arm

The amazing installation *Deep Play* (2007, for Documenta 12) involved 12 screens all showing different aspects of the 2006 World Cup – official footage, Farocki's own film of the action, player stats, animations, stadium surveillance, every action analysed, reinterpreted, turned into a representation. We are all prisoners.

Deep Play is the gallery version of a series of films about bodies under attack, tamed and drained by techniques of control: *Indoctrination* (1987) deals with persuasion tactics instilled into management; *How to Live in the German Federal Republic* (1990) examines the formation of professional behaviour; *The Appearance* (1996) looks at the world of advertising, *The Interview* (1997) and *The Creators of the Shopping Worlds* (2001) are the ethnographic films that the Western world, merchant of the mutilated life, deserves. A formal and political crux in Farocki's career, *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992, co-directed by Andrei Ujica), describes how a Moloch, Nicolae Ceausescu, is devoured by the surveillance apparatus he created himself: there has never been a better example of how images are performative.

In this respect true to his Marxist principles, Farocki's work eliminates the division between manual and intellectual labour. In *Interface* (1995), the analysis of the gestures of the film editor at his editing table creates an intersection between imaginative and actual movement – something explored even further in *Der Ausdruck der Hände* (which translates as 'The Expression of the Hands', 1997). The descriptions of the methods of the directors Straub & Huillet (*Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet at work on Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'*, 1983) and the actor Peter Lorre (*The Double Face of Peter Lorre*, 1984) extend this reflection to include major creators of the 20th century – among whom Harun Farocki undoubtedly ranks. 🍷



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TALE OF THE UNEXPECTED
Nothing is as it seems in *Gone Girl* – the latest bestselling novel adaptation from David Fincher (left) – which stars Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike (right) as a married couple whose relationship has gone disastrously wrong

LOVE IS THE DEVIL

David Fincher's big-screen version of Gillian Flynn's bestselling novel 'Gone Girl' explores the dark secrets at the heart of a dysfunctional marriage. Here the director discusses the narcissism of modern relationships and the slippery art of manipulating expectations of innocence and guilt

By Nick James

A couple of months back, I interviewed David Fincher in London about his new feature *Gone Girl* with the disadvantage that I couldn't see the film first. This arrangement is one to which *Sight & Sound* would not normally agree, but Fincher's astonishing directorial track record from *Se7en* (1995) to the first two episodes of *House of Cards* (2013) – as well as his status in Hollywood as the man to shepherd blockbuster adaptations with consummate polish and meticulous style – made it worthwhile.

So I read Gillian Flynn's sensational hit novel *Gone Girl* overnight – its gripping narrative made it easy – and met Fincher at his hotel the next day for a chat free of the usual junket pressures of time (for me) and repetition (for him). I'd interviewed the director once before, for *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008), when



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he'd seemed edgy. This time, happily, he was affable and courteous. When we found a quiet spot to talk, however, we were almost immediately asked to move by a manager. This happened three times. It was almost like a screwball comedy idea of an interview that could not get going. I confess it took a small hissy fit from me to get us left alone.

The interview, then, was on unequal terms. My questions come from imagining how the novel might play out solely from having seen the trailers. Fincher's answers are those of a director who's seen his final cut, knows the quality of what he's got, but doesn't yet know what audiences will make of it – although his very relaxed demeanour would suggest he thinks he's got a success on his hands. But Fincher's signature style of precision *noir* and his ability to transform intractable material into the cinematic form are so well established they can be taken as read – who else could have set the paranoid tone of *House of Cards* so well, and what better choice could there be to translate the native genius of Channel 4's *Utopia* for US audiences?

Gone Girl centres on a married couple. Ben Affleck is Nick Dunne, a New York journalist turned Missouri bar owner who comes back one night to find there's been a break-in at the family home; Rosamund Pike is Amy, Nick's wife, whom the police rapidly conclude is the victim of an abduction. They begin to suspect her husband might be responsible, and soon Nick is the subject of a media crucifixion. Flashbacks and a diary are important devices in the way the novel reveals different versions of events – thereby creating narrative problems of a kind Fincher delights in solving, in this case in collaboration with his screenwriter, who also happens to be the novel's author.

What I like most about the novel is its internalised portrayal of narcissism within marriage, how the self-centredness of husband and wife play off each other. The question of how well you can ever know the person you live with is grown-up stuff by modern Hollywood standards and if the novel flirts increasingly with the implausible the further it goes on, I get the sense that much has been tightened up in the transition to the screen. Stories full of portent and thunder have long been David Fincher's *métier*. If anyone can make *Gone Girl* thrill and intrigue on screen, it's likely to be him.

Nick James: What was the most difficult aspect of adapting the novel?

David Fincher: There's a lot of good stuff and you have to decide which 300 pages you're going to throw away. Oftentimes, the feeling from the moviemaker is that you don't want to involve the novelist, who's already had to bleed so much to find their way through the narrative. There's a brevity in thinking in pictures: certain faces have certain impacts, wardrobe makes other impacts. You have all of these other hints as to who these people are, they don't just have to be a collection of dramatic interactions; they can take centre stage in a different way to literature. But our biggest fear was, will we be able to find a screenplay in this highly convoluted narrative that will still be the equivalent of the ripping yarn and work in cinematic terms?

There was some reservation about whether Gillian could slaughter enough darlings. When they said to me, "We'll hire anybody you want to write the script", I said, "You already hired Gillian", and they said, "Yeah, do you want to wait to see what she comes up with?" I said, "Certainly, if she can solve the problems of the diaries." When I read [her draft] I thought, "She did it". She found a very simple narrative conceit and it pays off and it helps in the transition from the first to the second half of the story. There was a lot of hard work afterwards, distillation, but Gill is so hard-working, and she has that entertainer DNA. She knows how to hone an idea and move it.

NJ: Nick and Amy are failed journalists. They've tried being New Yorkers and have moved on to a smaller pond. How do you treat that in the film?

DF: The movie begins with Nick finding the broken glass in the house, so you have [to go back to] the meet-cute, the party in Dumbo [Brooklyn] where they meet, and how they test each other. We didn't pay too much attention to [what they did before]. There are enough times when he's asked, "So, you're a bartender?", "I *own* a bar." You see that he's given up the idea that he's a writer. He's long past the point where he was going to write the Great American Novel.

NJ: The way they compare themselves to everyone else is interesting.

DF: The flashbacks are from her diaries and completely subjective. He's presented very much objectively. That was one of the things we had to juggle in the shooting.

In America there's a narcissism about choosing a mate. I see it in so many relationships when they edge past that three-or-four-year mark. The façade begins to crack

PUBLIC DEFENDERS

Tyler Perry plays celebrity lawyer Tanner Bolt (below left), while Nick Dunne's loyal sister Margo is played by Carrie Coon (below right)



We had to say to Ben, “Now you’re doing a scene where you’re innocent.” He’s very much exposed in real time. With evidence of a struggle in the home, or when they find bloodstains on the wall or fingerprints in the hall, you’ve got to do one take where you behave this way, and another where you behave another way, so you modulate that performance according to where the audience is. How frustrating can we make it for the audience that he doesn’t behave in a way that we’re expecting?

NJ: What drew you to this story in the first place?

DF: In America there’s a narcissism about choosing a mate. I see it in so many relationships when they edge past that three-or four-year mark. The façade begins to crack, and you begin to realise that the person your spouse has presented themselves as is entirely different, and they may have lost the passion and impetus to put on that façade. So the film is very much about the resentment and dissonance that is created by having to admit to the person you’re most intimately involved with that you’re not going to keep up your end of the bargain. What Gillian did was to talk about it in a very mainstream, titillating format, where you get to explore what goes on in other people’s bedrooms through the viewfinder of the 24-hour cable news cycle. It can be a profound idea. The big question is, “Can you handle it?” Can you make headline news look real and still be part of a satire?

NJ: How do you achieve that?

DF: That’s the biggest issue. That’s why the cast was so specific to the material. Ben Affleck, in the part of his life where he has been hunted and antagonised, has experienced a lot of what this character needs to have access to. We’ve seen him lose his temper, we know he’s incredibly human and inherently likeable. He’s a guy who cares about what people think of him. He goes out of his way to make people comfortable in his presence, and that aspect of him was an important part of who Nick had to be. The thing I loved about Ros [Rosamund Pike] was that I had never got a feel for her. I’d appreciated her – I saw *An Education* – [but] you ask, “Is she 24 or 39?” You have a difficult time placing her. When I met her there was this only-child vibe. She was raised and doted on and is an only child, and Amy had to have that.

My issue became, “What’s the tone of this world?” We started talking about how to integrate Desi [Amy’s long-time admirer] into the headline news cycle – this mama’s



MEDIA CIRCUS
After Rosamund Pike’s Amy Dunne (below) goes missing, the media sets up camp outside the family home (above), determined to find someone to take the blame for her abduction

boy who’s wealthy and for whom Amy was the one that got away. How does he become embroiled back into her life, and how is he perverse enough in his odd sort of collector way, to become a viable suspect? So which actor is hard to put a finger on and is going to be spellbindingly clever and speedy? Neil Patrick Harris. He read the script, and said, “I’m going to kick the shit out of this.”

Then I was wondering about celebrity defence lawyer Tanner Bolt, which was kind of written for Alec Baldwin. I had met Tyler Perry when I went to Georgia to scout for *Benjamin Button*. I remember driving up the long drive to his studio and looking up to the roof and there’s this guy in a tracksuit and a robe or a smoking jacket. He had this radio-controlled plane that he was flying around. The assistant said, “Mr Perry will be down in a moment.” Tyler is totally gregarious, he puts you at ease, a great listener. So he gets to be the incredulous outsider.

With Detective Boney [Kim Dickens], Margo [Nick’s sister, played by Carrie Coon] and Tanner, you have three views from the cheap seats: Margo is invested in and cares about Nick; Boney is saying, “I want to believe that you didn’t do it, but you got to help me out here”; and then there’s Tanner saying, “Don’t do that, don’t bring this out, we’re not talking about that.”

NJ: Was there a particular moment in the film that you found most difficult?

DF: The scenes you think will be the most difficult get all of the pre-production time, so come the time to go they’re okay. You always find there’s one scene that reads on paper like, “They see each other across the room and fall in love” – that’s the one that takes you all day. It’s just a POV of someone walking in the door, it’s that thing that you can’t get right – and you [ask yourself]: “How do I imbue it with that thing you can’t explain?” That’s why [it’s great] to have someone adapt their own book, who understands it’s like a *New Yorker* cartoon – the scene itself has to get the way that people are sitting, what they’re wearing, it has to help everything so that you don’t have to have [expository dialogue like], “Good morning, Mr Water Commissioner.” She took to that.

NJ: I get it that you’re able to show Nick and Amy’s interiority in the way you’ve been describing, but did that present any issues when compressing the material in the book?

DF: It’s one of these stories that I tend to find



myself embroiled in. It requires an enormous amount of pieces to say, "Here's the good wife, the good neighbour, the good Christian, the good Missourian." And then when you go back and put together all of the sub-facets of that and see it in its totality. That was an interesting and fun part that I didn't quite get when reading the script. We need a flashback for this, and one for that. And then you realise it's five days of flashbacks in this house. It's a lot of material, 75 little scenes that happen that show you on the day she disappeared what really went down. That's a hard thing to get people to agree that there's production value in, because it's in the same fucking house. We already know this house because that's where Nick is bunkered. Shades are drawn and the paparazzi are outside. Now we're going to see it 180 degrees different.

NJ: I'd heard that the ending is slightly different?

DF: The book has different endings and we found a way to tie them all up. To the letter of the law it's not a different ending. To the ultimate ability to be able to lop off a good 100 pages, it's radically different.

NJ: The novel seems to dangle these threads in case anybody wants a sequel.

DF: I think she wanted to address everything as completely as she could, and you get no appreciation for that in the movies.

NJ: The intelligent populism of it is such that it does get you reflecting on modern marriage.

DF: If the movie is going to work, it has to be very grounded in the reality of how these kind of events unfold. Eventually it has to get to a place where it lets the audience off the hook because it's patently absurd, and then has to bring it back round, and go, "Oh, you thought you were getting off the hook?"

NJ: You must be hoping for a *Fatal Attraction de nos jours*?

DF: Yeah, except that in *Fatal Attraction* you get to live vicariously through people you empathise with, but you don't have to be them, as you do here. That's the trick with Gillian. It starts off being a situation you couldn't possibly imagine, but done in a very realistic way. So it gets to a point where you go, "Yes, that would be the way it would be like." Being confused about how a press conference is going to go down could ultimately lead to your confusion being perceived as disinterest.

NJ: It brings to mind the Madeleine McCann case, where the focus was initially on finding the missing girl, and then switched to the police briefly seeing the parents themselves as suspects.

DF: The thing that's familiar to us is the hum of the locusts, where you put a headline interviewer in, rabidly asking questions of people who are not used to that. You are going to get responses that, whether or not there was a fissure there to begin with, there is a fissure now. It is interesting to see how the [media] world gets away with that. Obviously along the way there are a lot of things that are revealed about Nick and his relationships, which explain his reservation to come right out and say things.

NJ: I'm not altogether convinced that he has to tell certain lies from the outset.

DF: In the book there are more of those. You have somebody who's affable and has skated on charm and finds themselves in a situation where they're hyper-scrutinised. You see it when teleprompters go out, how people instantly lose it. You want to live vicariously through



American movie studios want things to be mapped – you spend this, you'll get this much enjoyment. The problem is that the ingredients are always different

Nick to the extent that anybody would want to in that situation – it's amusing to watch people who are self-assured step on black ice.

NJ: Do you think audiences nowadays are more prepared to follow cold-hearted characters?

DF: Less and less as movies become more pre-digested. Movie studios want to be able to say we're spending \$350 million, we want this kind of outcome. The only way to do that is to lower expectations and guarantee a returnable investment. If you had a year to write a movie, a year to shoot it and a year to cut it, you could apply all those wind-tunnel tests, but you're not in that kind of business. It has to go out and it has to hit great. It has nothing to do with my craft and everything to do with how you market things. What we do are one-offs. American movie studios want things to be mapped – you spend this, you'll get this much enjoyment. The problem is that the ingredients are always different.

NJ: Are you finding it more difficult to find the kind of projects that you would like to do?

DF: I'm perfectly happy getting all the pervert cast-offs! The bane of our existence is, how do you explain enough of what this story is that people say, "I'm willing to try that", and yet, you don't want to tell them everything. It's a tricky proposition, movies are expensive.

This cost \$58-62 million. It's a middle-budget movie, and they're harder and harder to get made. They do still get made – *The Social Network* cost \$48 million, *Dragon Tattoo* \$90 million, but that was because we had to go to Sweden to shoot, with nine-hour days, in winter, 16 hours of darkness. We ended up shooting many more days than we would have in California. But you're not going to get four feet of snow in California. Nobody put a wing on their house from it. *Fight Club* cost \$65 million, and that was way back when, but nobody got a Bentley off that either. You never know what stuff is going to be worth. I can't say that *Seven* was worth the \$35 million spent on it because it made \$250 million worldwide. For me and my filmography, *Zodiac* cost \$63 million, and we grossed \$30 million, but I am glad I made it. You have to always believe that it's going to be worth it. 



Gone Girl is released in UK cinemas on 3 October and will be reviewed in our next issue

TRIPS TO THE DARK SIDE (Clockwise from top left) Brad Pitt in *Se7en* (1995); Pitt and Edward Norton in *Fight Club* (1999); Rooney Mara in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011); and *Zodiac* (1995)

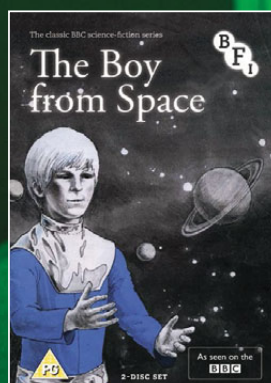
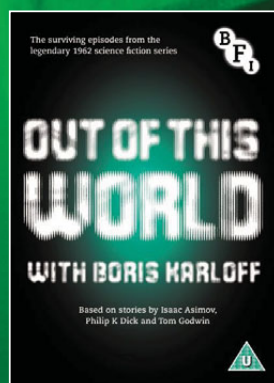
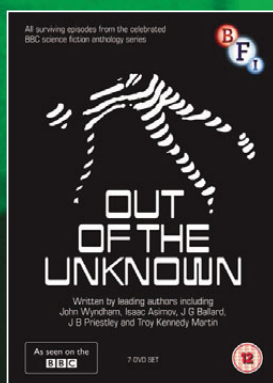
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Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard's '20,000 Days on Earth' presents a stunningly inventive docufiction portrait of 24 hours in the life of Australian rocker Nick Cave, merging archive footage, live performance, dream sequences and even a dose of good old-fashioned Lacanian psychoanalysis

By Thirza Wakefield

Australian musician, songwriter and author Nick Cave has had a long, if intermittent, relationship with cinema. He played the part of the prisoner Maynard in – and was one of a number of co-writers on – John Hillcoat's feature debut *Ghosts of the Civil Dead* in 1988, five years after the break-up of his post-punk band The Birthday Party. In the interceding time, he'd formed the Bad Seeds with guitarist Blixa Bargeld and Mick Harvey, while living in West Berlin. His first solo screenplay came much later in 2005 with his script for Hillcoat's *The Proposition*, and the pair continued their collaboration in 2012 with *Lawless*. Cave has acted in a handful of other films – twice with Brad Pitt, in *Johnny Suede* (1991) and *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007) – and he and the Bad Seeds featured in Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire* (1987), playing a set in a Berlin bar. Cave has also composed numerous film soundtracks with extant Bad Seeds member Warren Ellis. Now he stars in a new film, as himself.

But who exactly is he, himself? He's a musician whose music is populated with a multitude of persons, real and unreal: out of the Old and New Testament, and the Southern gothic tradition: Stagger Lee; the inhabitants of 'The Carny' ('Dog-boy, Atlas, Half-Man, the geeks', the circus hands and a horse named Sorrow); Johnny Cash's 'The Singer'; Henry Lee; the death-row inmate of 'The Mercy Seat'; and women, lovers past and present. These characters throng the body of his work, spanning four decades, and are brought to threshing life in Cave's charismatic performances. They partake of the portmanteau myth of Nick Cave, the rock icon who appears unassailable and unavailable on stage, stalking around like a demented preacher.

The innovative *20,000 Days on Earth* by contemporary artist couple Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard puts another Nick Cave on the dais – the mortal who





GHOST WRITER
Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard's *20,000 Days on Earth* documents the creative process of Nick Cave, whom Pollard describes as 'the hardest working, most progressive, professional, down-to-earth, yet crazy-big thinker that we've ever met'

meets everyday appointments and drives around his adoptive home of Brighton like Iggy Pop's 'The Passenger'. When, in the opening minutes of the film, the musician stands chest-naked before his bathroom mirror, his is a body like any other. "My face is finished," he sings in Grinderman's 'No Pussy Blues'. This is thin and skin Nick Cave, flesh past 50, with a bloodshot eye.

20,000 Days on Earth is hard to classify. Co-written by Cave, it was unlikely ever to be a behind-the-scenes, tell-all rockumentary. In the broadest sense, *20,000 Days* is docufiction: it emboldens fact, compresses it more densely than it appears in the pedestrian passage of normal life. While on the one hand, it imagines an ordinary day in the life of Nick Cave (disciplined artist, family man) from the moment of his waking till night's fall; on the other hand, it engineers a hyperreality, simultaneously suggesting the truth, but leaving us asking, "Can this really be?"

One critical ingredient in the project is Nick Cave's voice. His vocal, like his stage presence, is inseparable from his music; as integral to the myth as his dyed and shined black hair, and imposing suited stature. Cave narrates in voiceover, when not in direct conversation with figures from his past (Kylie Minogue, the German musician and one-time Bad Seed Blixa Bargeld), whom he daydreams into being to sit alongside him in his car.

Cave speaks frankly and lucidly about his method of work, his numerous collaborations, his childhood and formative experiences ("those moments when the gears of the heart really change"), but he also speaks of abstract things: fragmentary musings like the seeds of ideas that sometimes make it into full-blown songs, sometimes stay entombed in his notebooks. Forsyth and Pollard have disinterred a few of them – it was one such idea that gave the film its title: the germ of a song that Cave couldn't make work, and was abandoned. The resulting voiceover is a rigging; a mesh, oblique and non-narrative like Cave's best songs, which give off a mood like musk, and spasm with meaning.

The film is diverse in its approach to its subject; integrating archive footage, live concert recording, material archive – a room full of boxes, custom-built for Cave to explore in person – and a session with a Lacanian psychoanalyst. It plays out like an enormous scrapbook riffled by a gust of wind from an open window, with memories, influences, souvenirs and aspirations pasted into its pages. Its purview is rich in counterpoint: are we watching a day or a life? Is this a film about fixedness and constancy or about "transforming" and "vibrating", as he sings on 'Jubilee Street'? Is it about the genesis of a song or the cycle of an album? Is it a psalm or creation story? The film is a little of all these things. Its aesthetic is busy, but clean; its assemblage of stuff (Cave's photographs, found things) – "important shit for me at the time" – diagrammatic, like the atomisation of a life.

This is the first feature from Forsyth and Pollard, whose background is in installation art with an emphasis on sound and music. Mid-career, they became interested in the re-enactment of culturally significant performance events, which reached a pitch with their 'A Rock 'N' Roll Suicide' (1998) – in which they used actors for an exact, live restaging of David Bowie's farewell concert as Ziggy Stardust at the Hammersmith Odeon. This practice has given them a deep understanding of the atmospherics of



THE DRIVER
Jane Pollard, Iain Forsyth, Nick Cave and his wife Susie Bick on set (above); Cave (opposite, from top) in *20,000 Days on Earth*, with Blixa Bargeld, Ray Winstone and Kylie Minogue

the live music event, and it shows here: their editing of compiled concert footage as Cave performs the finished 'Jubilee Street' is electrifying. The pair have worked with Cave before: most recently, on a soundtrack to the audiobook of Cave's novel *The Death of Bunny Munro*. And it's possibly because of the friendship born out of their collaboration with Cave that the filmmakers show no interest in indexing his inspirations in an effort to lay naked the makings of his talent, but wish instead to inspire the audience by his example. At the end of the film, the mystery of the human mind, buried under bone and viscera, remains intact and as beguiling as ever.

Thirza Wakefield: Do you conceive of yourselves as two distinct artists working in collaboration – like Nick Cave and Warren Ellis – or do you feel more like the artist singular, fused and channelling one inspiration?

Jane Pollard: We have worked together for 21 years. We don't know any different. We were at college when we started working together, doing our BA at Goldsmiths, so it's man and boy for us. It's what makes us quite good at working with other people – whether that's Nick [Cave] or Scott Walker or whoever. We have to externalise things. There is no real internal process for us in terms of the creative process. It has to be spoken about. And, because of that, you soon get very used to how ideas can fly and fail.

The thing I really like about the way Nick talks about the creative process – and the way, therefore, the film does as well – is that he neither demystifies nor mystifies it. What it does show is that it isn't this magical thing that only a small percentage of gifted people have access to. If you have a small idea and you protect it from influences that could knock it off track, and see it through, then that is it. That is the creative process. It's not about a perfect idea being dropped on you from the gods. It's a very real, workable thing.

TW: How did your approach to making a feature differ from your approach to your earlier installation artworks?

JP: When we're making art stuff, we always come up with the feeling we want the audience to have when they experience it, because with art it's not 90 minutes, it's three minutes, so you have to work in a single feeling. Even if the piece has a narrative thread, there's a feeling –

a tone – the whole thing has to have. And we didn't know any better, so we approached the film like that.

Iain Forsyth: But that's really a product of when we were at college. The time that we were at Goldsmiths was just after the big YBA [Young British Artists]/Damien Hirst art explosion, which in one respect was an amazing thing and opened up the art world. But for art students it also created this idea of a fast-track to success – that you could go to college, do your time, leave and become a kind of art star. So there was this pervasive idea, about a lot of the work that was being made at that time, that if you could intellectualise it, if you could talk about it and frame it within the context of the right philosophers, the right thinkers, then actually it didn't matter what the work was. It didn't matter what your emotional engagement with it was.

JP: Very 'emperor's new clothes'. If the right circle of people nodded and permitted the conceit, then that was all right. Gladly so, from our point of view, because I don't think our career would have happened without it. We just got really angry with that, and most things we've done have been born out of that anger.

That feeling that we wanted *20,000 Days on Earth* to leave you with was... inspiration. We wanted the film to inspire people, but inspire people very particularly: with the feeling that Nick inspires in us. He is the hardest working, most forward-focused, progressive, professional, down-to-earth, yet crazy-big thinker that we've ever met. And it's just inspiring when you come up against that and you look at his body of work and how he's still challenging himself daily. He still puts in the hours, and he's still trying to reach something that he doesn't think he's attained yet. We just wanted people to leave feeling that they should see that thing through. Do more, try harder, be better.

TW: Cave is working hard, in part, because he feels chased by time – as he says, he's afraid of losing his memory. There's fear in his industriousness. In thinking about time, at what point did you decide the film would take this framing device – the thread of a single day?

IF: It came quickly... Nick had two or three notebooks he'd been writing lyrics in, and we were going through them. One of the things we found – that we later learned was a song he'd started writing and abandoned when it wasn't working – was a note that read something like '19,922 days on earth'. There were all these weird calculations next to it, so we asked him about it. He said he'd started this song, and done a mental calculation: "How long have I been alive?" So he phoned his PA and said, "Can you work it out for me?"

JP: Poor Rachel!

IF: So Rachel worked it out and phoned him back and said, "You've been alive for this long, but – interestingly – on the day you started recording the album, you'd been alive for exactly 20,000 days." What struck us was this measuring of time in a different way. It seemed significant: what is the measure of time, what time do we have, and what do we choose to do or not do with the time that we've got?

JP: We had concerns about how to structure the film. Given that anger-fuelled background of reacting against insubstantial art, there was a real worry about being seen as pretentious or abstract, obtuse or obscure – all those things you associate with an art or 'arty' film. And so

we needed something very real to pin our structure on. Having found the title, the idea of a day on earth was that thing that we were looking for.

TW: That last shot with the camera receding over the sea is moving – the closing of another day echoing with the completion of another song. Can you tell you me about the ending?

JP: It would have been very easy to climax the film with the stage performance, to cut at the point where he's transforming and he's at his peak. And yet we had this real instinct that we weren't going to be making the standard concert film. We couldn't finish here; it was too easy. Yes, when he's on stage, it's like he's conquered the world, but really he's just one man in a very big world. What interested us is that, even being so small, he manages to have this presence and this impact on the world.

IF: That a tiny thing – a tiny body of work in the grand scheme of things – can have such resonance is incredible.

TW: I'm interested in your use of the close-up – not just in this film, but in your other works too.

IF: A lot of it comes from that time when we first became aware of the potential to use moving image as a medium... We had a huge passion for the performance artists that came out of New York at the tail end of the 60s and early 70s, who had become interested in video as a medium: Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman...

JP: Dan Graham...

IF: The way a lot of those guys were using cameras

We found one of Nick's notes that read something like '19,922 days on earth'. He said he'd done a mental calculation: 'How long have I been alive?'



was in creating a feedback loop: having a camera in front of them and a monitor next to it. They would do something in front of the camera, which usually meant they were quite close to it, and would be watching it back as they did it.

JP: They could use the edges of the monitor as a frame, like the frame of the performance space. A lot of our really early work came out of those influences... And if it's a performance you're recording, then, yeah, head and shoulders is the obvious choice. That's where all the communication is: it's eyes, it's hands; it's all the bits you need.

TW: *Below the waist is dead.*

JP: Yeah, newsreader style! The crew sets something up, and makes us take a look, and we're like "Yeah... get in closer!" Our using close-up probably also comes from not having a history in filmmaking; not being used to having art directors or production designers on set. So, in our experience, a lot of what's around the person you're filming isn't that interesting. The thing you're filming – the person – is.

TW: *How have you found working with a DP?*

JP: It took us a while to find a DP who was happy with the way we work. The set [for us] always belongs to the actor. The crew has to pull back. We let Nick define how long something will go on. As long as he's talking and engaging and going, we don't cut. We never repeat. Everything was improvised in the film. Nothing was ever repeated. Even if it was amazing, and you're thinking, "I wish we could have got a camera round that," you don't. So everything's considered as a cutaway from that point. I mean some of it's practical. Nick can't repeat stuff without sounding self-conscious...

We met with some amazing DPs... [but] Erik [Wilson] was the only one who seemed challenged and had a glint in his eye, as if to say, "So we're doing it in one take, are we? Right then – we'll find a way around it."

TW: *I'd like to ask about set dressing and its place in documentary.*

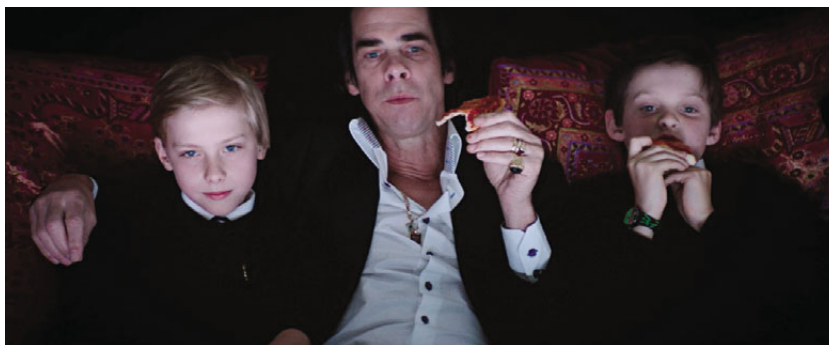
IF: The whole thing was generally just a real blending of – I want to say, truth and untruth. But it's not even untrue, really.

JP: Massive construction. But in a way, Nick's entire life is like that. Nick was the perfect subject for us because we wanted to experiment with that balance between emotional authenticity and constructed reality, and his whole life is totally unreal. That life is not a normal life. He goes on stage and he performs, but he does it night after night, so it's a kind of inauthentic authenticity.

IF: You go out for dinner with Nick and there are people sneaking photos, so even just being in a restaurant for him is like being in a kind of performance. I think he's constantly aware that there's a critical eye on him.

JP: So that idea of him being very natural, very open, but in a hugely constructed environment like a set – that's totally normal for Nick; he didn't find that difficult at all. The thing he found the hardest was the archive; the fact that it wasn't all archive. There were boxes on the shelves that had nothing in them. They were just set dressing...

We said to Erik: we want the way this is filmed to make you totally aware of how slippery and unreliable memory is; how memory is this kind of construction. A lot of memories of my childhood are because of the photos I've seen or the stories I've been told. I don't have any, I don't



think, organic memory of that thing, but I remember the photograph and I remember being told the story. And in telling it again, you misremember and enhance.

TW: *Did you have an idea of how you wanted the film to sound?*

JP: Sound came before look for us. It had to be incredible. Because we knew it wasn't going to be a music film, it wasn't going to be the kind of film in which you could rely on your concert footage to bring the world of the film alive. And also because we knew we were going to do things like manifest the figments of Nick's imagination in the car. I'm yet to see a good, visual way of illustrating that. What is the special effect that conveys that Kylie isn't real; she's just in his mind? I don't know how you do that. But you can with sound. You can just stretch and distort notes, and it disturbs the pit of your stomach.

TW: *Can I ask what's next?*

JP: We're working on fiction features... We've got about three at very early stages.

IF: The thing we really enjoyed about this process – that's uniquely different to our process of making art... is that you're very aware with a gallery that you've got a transient audience. They're generally passing through, and if you can grab someone's attention for three or four or five minutes, you've done well. With moving-image installation, people are often coming in midway through, so the idea of a story arc just doesn't make sense. You're constantly trying to distil ideas into something not necessarily simple, but that can be grasped speedily. And a lot of the devices of storytelling aren't really available to you. You can't develop a story. You can't return to a theme and build on it. And so, suddenly, in a weird and thrilling way, it's like someone's given us a whole new toolkit. 

20,000 Days on Earth is released in UK cinemas on 19 September and is reviewed on page 87. Nick Cave, Warren Ellis and Barry Adamson will be performing live at a screening of the film at London's Barbican Centre on 17 September

FAMILY GUY
Nick Cave eating pizza in front of the TV with his two sons, and in conversation with psychotherapist Darian Leader in scenes from *20,000 Days on Earth* that walk a delicate line between reality and fiction

Nick was the perfect subject because we wanted to experiment with that balance between emotional authenticity and constructed reality, and his whole life is totally unreal

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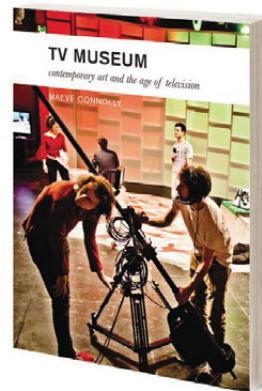
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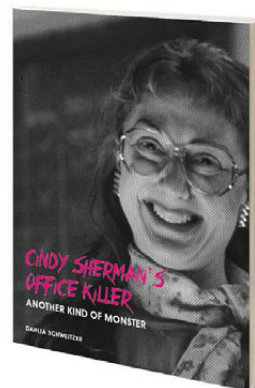
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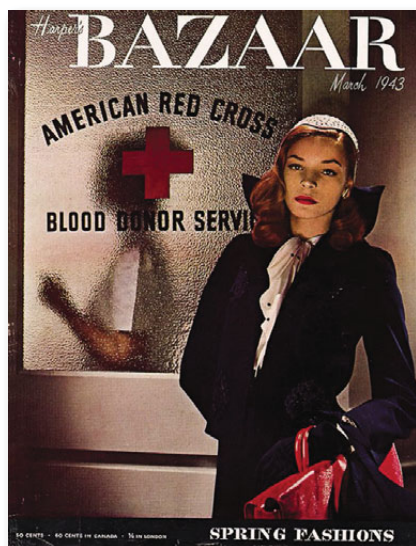
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SLIM PICKINGS

For all of the generous obituaries that accompanied Lauren Bacall's recent death, her status as a Hollywood legend is actually built on just two films – 'To Have and Have Not' and 'The Big Sleep'. In everything else, she was at best respectable, at worst lost

By David Thomson

A STAR IS BORN
Lauren Bacall was spotted by Howard Hawks's wife Nancy on the cover of *Harper's Bazaar* (above), which eventually led to her landing the role of 'Slim' in *To Have and Have Not* (1944), opposite her future husband Humphrey Bogart (right)

With Lauren Bacall dead, it becomes easier, or more necessary to appreciate how little there was to her. At 89, she had what is called a body of work so that, well in advance, we could have foretold the obituary use of 'legend'. But if she was a legend, still the readers of every newspaper or website knew to expect an image of the sidelong allure of Bacall at 19, or 20. No one would have shown her in *Written on the Wind* (1956), *The Shootist* (1976) or *The Mirror Has Two Faces* (1996). Maybe she was a legend, but she was a moment, too, and the moment was a long time ago. It had very little to do with the elderly woman who was rather a social bore, bossy and autocratic, and simply not much of an actress.

Consider *Young Man with a Horn* (1949). That was made only a few years after her moment, at Warner Bros, which was her studio. It's one of those remarkable messes, a film full of blessings, but out of control. Michael Curtiz directed it, just as he had done *Casablanca* (1942) – that is to say, with unfailing stylishness and happy incomprehension. It's about a young trumpet-player, allegedly based on Bix Beiderbecke, but surrendering that man's melancholy sweetness to the unbeatable drive of Kirk Douglas. He has a lovely girl who is Doris Day, but then he meets this weird witch – a handsome but forbidding society woman, Amy North, who has soirées and wants interesting conquests, and whose idea of love or romance is to supply fodder for her neurotic intelligence. She's Lauren Bacall in a role that anyone in Hollywood could have told her not to take – the woman is a praying mantis, ruinous, cold and uncomfortable. The audience is meant to hate her and Curtiz shows no mercy in exposing her rather cruel gaze and the thin, acidic smile that existed in our legend. She might be one half of Hollywood's most famous marriage, but she was over by 1950. Anyone could tell the message of *Young Man*: that education in a woman was a poison that ate away her magic.

Could Bacall's career of the last 60 years have earned full pages when she died? Isn't she the single dull thing in *Written on the Wind*, and aren't her eyes half-closed against knowing it? There's one film – Minnelli's *Designing Woman* (1957) – where she's fun. You feel she liked Gregory Peck and enjoyed the romantic tease of it. And I don't want to say one word against the notion that Lauren Bacall in life could be smart, sarcastic and appealing – Sinatra, Adlai Stevenson, Jason Robards, those may be her credits. But who's interested in real life?

And who can really believe that the brief magic has ever had enough explanation? Betty Joan Perske was on the make and had been for a little while. There had been at least a fling with Kirk Douglas, and if you think Kirk was a kid who liked to hold hands in the moonlight and wonder why he wasn't at war, then you're not the reader for this essay. Then somehow Betty got herself on the cover of *Harper's Bazaar*, looking like a young vampire waiting outside a Red Cross blood bank. She was 18, maybe, or from the 18th century. This was no kid, but a femme fatale.

Nancy Hawks, otherwise known as 'Slim', saw the magazine because a large part of her life was devoted to looking at magazines – that world of dreams and interiors. She passed the glossy paper over to her husband – this was 1943, and he was Howard Hawks, old enough to be Nancy's father. He liked what he saw; he liked the photograph. So, yes, he pursued and found the real woman, the real Betty (do you hear *Mulholland Dr.*?) and, naturally, he intended to get her into bed, if only to persuade himself he was alive. What did he have to offer her in return? Nothing but a personal service



contract for the movies, an on-screen partnership with a major star in a piece of material that begged to be made if only to show that in the middle of the war Hollywood and America were cute enough to know that dreaming was still the big thing. In addition, there was Nancy Hawks to dress Betty, make her up and give her a few tart cracks for the screen. On top of it all, Howard was ready to assure her that he was the best-looking, most suave and movie-wise sugar daddy a girl was going to get. So sign the contract, make your voice deeper, get used to being called 'Slim' and 'Howard's girl'.

"Is there a part?" she might have asked, determined to hold on to dignity.

"Sure," said Hawks. "You're 19, washed up on this cock-
amie Caribbean island with nothing but some terrific
clothes and an impossible attitude. You sing a little song
and you lean in doorways and say wicked things."

"Well, that's not very much," suppose she said, and he
told her to wait until she saw the picture.

What emerged is an unquestioned peak of Hollywood
culture, in which a desperate hooker becomes a honeyed
enchantment, where an uneducated kid could come out
of Oscar Wilde and Dorothy Parker, and where sublime,
scandalous flim-flam seems like the epitome of sophis-
tication. You can imagine the look on Howard's face,
declining anything as vulgar as a smile, and you can con-
jure the assumed clauses in the personal service contract.
Let's be clear: he hadn't just hired Betty; he owned her,
and he felt he had created her.

Why is *To Have and Have Not* (1944) a great film, while
Casablanca (its clear studio progenitor, from 1942) is
merely a classic? I think it's because the Hawks film is as
indifferent to the war and its crisis as it is to the Heming-
way novel. *To Have and Have Not* is a romantic comedy,
far closer to *His Girl Friday* (1940) than to *Casablanca*'s
rather shame-faced agreement to go along with the war
effort. As always, when Hawks was at his best, it's a film
about talk, undertalk, looking at people, flirt and fantasy.
In 1944, and in 2014, it is a film for delirious and detached
aesthetes who have given up bothering about reality, let
alone dealing with it. It's for us. And it has not dated. The
talk about whistling still seems perched on a narrow
edge of cheesy poetry and chic innuendo.

That's her moment, and Bogart was her first conquest,
plus a proof of conquest itself. Just as Howard reached
out for rights, so this balding, bad-tempered man who
was younger than Hawks but far more broken down
and racked by a ghastly third marriage, looked at her and
said, "Gee – why not me?" So don't say the daft romance
of movies can't work. If you're anywhere near the right
age (God help you), you fell for the movies the way Bogey
took a dive for Betty. The 'legend' that was declared when
Ms Bacall died is the one so many readers here hold to
still: that an entertainment movie, made with wit and
grace and no pretension, can hold the screen for a couple
of hours and stay with us forever or for as long as nostal-
gia needs. We want to hope and believe in our past.

Audiences noticed this attraction, even if the Steve-
Slim bond in *To Have and Have Not* was far from war-
time wholesomeness. The studio demanded more of
the same. Howard's hunch was a coup at the box office,
even if he felt jilted or upstaged. The Bogart marriage to
Mayo Methot was in tatters and Bogart behaved horribly,
indecisively and naturally, things he seldom showed on



FACE TO FACE
(Clockwise from above)
Bacall with Gregory Peck in
Designing Woman (1957);
with Bogart in *Dark Passage*
(1947) and *The Big Sleep*
(1946); with Charles Boyer
in *Confidential Agent* (1945);
and with Dorothy Malone in
Written on the Wind (1956)

screen. Which way would he jump? Was it true love that
won the day or the gravity of box office?

Whatever answer you prefer, the sequel, *The Big Sleep*
(1946), is superior to the original, and so daring that it
courts the *film noir* atmospheric and the detective story
plot because it has a rarity in view: the screwball ro-
mance in which the balling is lewd, lively and a baffle-
ment to censors. Its story-stopping routines are ravish-
ingly bold, and close to late Buñuel – the discreet charm
of the shamus? In Chandler's novel, Vivian is a very dif-
ferent character – a drunk coming to a bad end. But in the
movie Marlowe and Vivian are one of the most fanciful
and beguiling marriages in movie history, silhouettes
hollowed out by smoking.

That was 1946. Then the myth collapsed into respect-
ability. Bacall had made it, but 'it' disappeared. In *Confiden-
tial Agent* (1945) she seemed lost; in *Dark Passage* (1947)
she had little to say; in *Key Largo* (1948) she is convention-
ally sentimental and dutiful and her looks were clench-
ing as we watched her become a 'good woman'. There
was nothing better to come. By the time of *Written on the*

KOBAL COLLECTION (3) BET NATIONAL ARCHIVE (2)



After her role in Howard Hawks's 'The Big Sleep' in 1946, the myth collapsed into respectability. Bacall had made it, but 'it' disappeared



Wind the screen writhed with the recklessness of Dorothy Malone (a naughty sidebar in *The Big Sleep*), while Bacall stands to one side with a pained and pinched look on her face that can't help knowing what a silly story this is. She had moments later – *Applause* on stage and *By Myself* as a bestselling book – but she lingered in movies where her savage voice showed disapproval and regret.

She did not act, in the sense of giving her presence and her idea to a scheme of pretending. She was haughty, like a society woman who finds show business rather silly. Perhaps she always felt that Slim and Vivian were tramps, beneath her, droll miscreants for playtime. It was Hawks (and maybe the real Slim) who recognised the irony and the risk in the initial enterprise, and who realised that for 90 minutes an American kid could change the world with mere insolence. No one knew the word 'feminism' yet, but that code would exult in Bacall's manly panache and her short-lived sultry hush. As Chris Marker taught us in *La Jetée* (1962), someone can shift from momentariness to myth in just a few seconds. You do know how to watch for that, don't you? 🍷

Throughout his career, Pawel Pawlikowski has shown an unwillingness to be constrained by commercial or editorial pressures, and demonstrated a particular affinity for exiles and outsiders – and his latest, *Ida*, a drama examining post-WWII Poland, is no exception

By Michael Brooke



Since its world premiere at the Gdynia Film Festival last September, Pawel Pawlikowski's fourth feature *Ida* – the tale of a young novitiate nun who discovers a dark family secret dating back to the Nazi

occupation – has been leading a charmed life. Starting with that festival's best film, actress, cinematography and design prizes, it picked up a clutch of awards worldwide (including the London Film Festival's Best Film award), and was recently selected as Poland's submission for next year's Oscars. More surprisingly, given the low-key performance of Pawlikowski's previous films, it's been a startling commercial success, breaking French box-office records for non-English foreign-language films and grossing nearly \$4 million in the fiercely competitive US arthouse market.

So is this a marked departure from Pawlikowski's previous films? Superficially it looks like it, but not in the way one might expect. Far from being more commercially oriented, he's ditched familiar names like Paddy Considine, Ethan Hawke and Kristin Scott Thomas in favour of Agata Trzebuchowska (wholly unknown) and Agata Kulesza (established in Poland, unknown elsewhere); he's filming in his native language for the first time since *Palace Life* (1988), a BBC documentary about novelist-filmmaker Tadeusz Konwicki; and the film was shot and framed in black-and-white Academy ratio, which over the last 60 years has shifted from universal norm to something weirdly alien, at least for a new film.

In other words, *Ida* is actually quintessential Pawlikowski. From his earliest documentaries, he's shown a keen interest in fish-out-of-water exiles, often with an Eastern European background. For instance, there's Leningrad tram driver Dmitri Dostoevsky, touring Germany in an attempt at converting his great-grandfather Fyodor's reputation into sufficient cash to buy a Mercedes (*Dostoevsky's Travels*, 1991), or the alcoholic itinerant writer Venedikt Yerofeyev shuttling between Moscow and Pietushki, a place where he hopes to find "salvation and joy" (*From Moscow to Pietushki*, 1990). His fictional characters show similar tendencies: the Russian would-be émigrés Tanya and her son Artyom, attempting to claim asylum in a cold, forbidding Britain (*Last Resort*, 2000), or the American writer stuck in an equally chilly Paris (*The Woman in the Fifth*, 2011).

Other Pawlikowski subjects and characters are out of step in other ways. His studies of politicians tend to be of mavericks like Václav Havel (*A Czech Drama*, 1989 – broadcast several months before the Velvet Revolution), Radovan Karadzic (*Serbian Epics*, 1992) or Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (*Tripping with Zhirinovskiy*, 1995). The protagonists of the documentary-turned-drama *Twockers* (1998) steal things from cars (including a live dog, which they then try to ransom), *My Summer of Love* (2004) has social opposites beginning an

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GETTY IMAGES

SECRETS AND LIES
Agata Kulesza as Wanda and Agata Trzebuchowska as the titular heroine in *Ida* – directed by Pawel Pawlikowski (above left) – an exploration of the legacy of the Nazi occupation of Poland



THE OUTSIDER

impassioned lesbian affair, while Hungarian émigré Margit in *The Woman in the Fifth* (2011) is impossible to pin down for reasons that would require a significant plot spoiler to divulge. His unrealised projects include a biopic of Sylvia Plath.

Pawlikowski was born in Poland, but spent much of his life in Britain, his parents emigrating when he was in his early teens. After studying literature and philosophy, he began contributing ideas to the BBC Community Programme Unit's Open Space forum, one of which became his first film, *Lucifer over Lancashire* (1987). This was a portrait of an evangelical priest who wanted to erect a gigantic crucifix on top of Pendle Hill (where witches had been hanged 300 years earlier) as a symbol of defiance of Satanism. However, this splendidly *Fitzcarraldo*-like conceit fizzled out when he was refused planning permission, thus denying Pawlikowski his defining image. However, he resurrected the idea in *My Summer of Love*, and there's a passing hint of it in the opening scenes of *Ida*, in which four young novices carry a lifesize statue of Christ through the snow.

Shortly after *Lucifer*, Pawlikowski was taken under the wing of Nigel Williams, commissioning editor of the BBC's *Bookmark* strand, and made a number of documentaries that were sometimes only peripherally about literature. Despite their films' considerable stylistic differences, there are many parallels between the early careers of Pawlikowski and Ken Russell: lacking formal film training, both joined the BBC in their early thirties, taking full advantage of comparatively relaxed regimes that turned a blind eye to a certain amount of trial and error (since their programmes were made by tiny teams and screened to not much bigger audiences, they weren't rigorously pre-planned and micro-managed), and both were criticised for making 'documentaries' that felt more like fiction – although who would believe a character like Dmitri Dostoevsky if he'd been invented?

Early topics included novelists Robert McCrum and Tadeusz Konwicki, exiled Soviet satirist Vladimir Voinovich, writer-politician Václav Havel, and the 'kids from FAMU', the brilliant 1960s generation of Czech filmmakers who graduated from the famous Prague film school. *From Moscow to Pietushki* was a tough pitch because its subject, Venedikt Yerofeyev, had had very little published, and his most famous work, *Moscow to the End of the Line* (aka *Moscow Stations*), had yet to be translated into English (Pawlikowski had read it in Polish) and was barely known even in Russia. Yerofeyev was terminally ill with throat cancer (he died a month after the programme's broadcast), and when it became clear that a conventional interview would be less than lucid, Pawlikowski devised a more elaborate exploration

of Yerofeyev's Russia in general and the Russian addiction to alcohol in particular, with the 12 stations on the railway line from Moscow to Pietushki becoming surrogates for the stations of the cross. The programme won an Emmy and a Royal Television Society award, putting both Yerofeyev and 'Paul Pawlikowski' (as he was credited throughout this period) firmly on the map.

Although still made for *Bookmark*, his next documentaries were just as wayward. *Dostoevsky's Travels* was far more about East-West relations at the time of the collapse of communism than it was about literature – old Fyodor barely gets a look-in except via the lectures of his great-grandson, who hastily plagiarises from the work of other scholars after he realises they might be a nice little earner. *Serbian Epics* was his most ambitious BBC project and his most controversial, not least because it was screened on the same day US officials announced that Radovan Karadzic (then a constant, deceptively affable presence on news bulletins) might be indictable as a war criminal. Questions were asked in the House of Commons and a spokesman for the Board of Deputies of British Jews compared it to a hypothetical documentary about the influence of German nationalism on Hitler's paintings. Far from glorifying or exculpating Karadzic, however, Pawlikowski sought to depict the deadly absurdity of Serbian nationalism and explore its complex historical roots, nurtured by a strong oral poetry tradition that Karadzic saw himself as continuing through both literature (he was a published poet) and increasingly murderous politics.

Serbian Epics remains by some distance Pawlikowski's most formally adventurous film, but it sealed his fate at the BBC. When it was finally aired, John Birt had become director-general, and the era of indulging wayward émigré filmmakers was essentially over. After examining *The Grave Case of Charlie Chaplin* (1994), the semi-dramatised story of the real-life theft and ransoming of Chaplin's coffin, Pawlikowski made one last documentary hurrah with *Tripping with Zhirinovsky* (1995), in which he grasped the nationalist nettle again by following the so-called 'Liberal Democrat' (actually extreme nationalist) Vladimir Zhirinovsky – at the time arguably Russia's best-known politician after Yeltsin and Gorbachev – on a cruise to New York City, accompanied by 200 followers. As with *Serbian Epics*, Pawlikowski let Zhirinovsky condemn himself with his own words instead of imposing an overt agenda.

And then, like Ken Russell, Lindsay Anderson and Krzysztof Kieslowski before him, Pawlikowski switched decisively from documentary to fiction. His dramatic debut, *The Stringer* (1998), has barely been seen (Pawlikowski has essentially disowned it), but

Pawlikowski favours a series of stark images in 'Ida' as spare as anything by Dreyer or Bresson, with each shot giving off a similarly numinous charge

FACT AND FICTION
Pawlikowski cut his teeth on documentaries, such as (below, from left) *From Moscow to Pietushki*, *Dostoevsky's Travels* and *Serbian Epics*, before switching to fiction with (opposite, from left) *Last Resort*, *My Summer of Love* and *The Woman in the Fifth*



the same year's short feature *Twockers* was far more characteristic. It was planned as a documentary about disaffected Yorkshire teenagers, but mutated into a love story when Pawlikowski and co-director Ian Duncan met Trevor Wademan, a car thief with an unexpectedly rich cultural and emotional life. If the story about him falling in love and trying to go straight is familiar, the treatment is refreshingly different, with Pawlikowski eschewing Loachian social realism in favour of a poeticised treatment of both character and landscape (the camera barely moves), counterpointed and sometimes undermined by Trevor's raucously funny first-person narration.

His first big-screen feature, *Last Resort*, was a progression from that, with Paddy Considine's Alfie not far removed from a Trevor ten years on. He's the manager of an amusement arcade at Stonehaven, a fictional South Coast resort that doubles as an asylum processing centre, in which would-be immigrants Tanya (Dina Korzun) and Artyom (Artyom Strelnikov) are confined. Working for the first time with Ryszard Lenczewski, who would photograph or co-photograph all his big-screen features (as an aside, Pawlikowski's cinematographers were often compatriots, and distinguished ones at that: Bogdan Dziworski, Jacek Petrycki and Wit Dabal all come from the great Polish documentary tradition), Pawlikowski makes much of the bleakness of both the man-made and natural landscapes, with an almost monochrome palette – Alfie's arcade briefly splashes the screen with colour.

Adapted from Helen Cross's novel, *My Summer of Love* followed four years later, and was Pawlikowski's first film about the relationship between two very different women – although unlike the situation in *Ida*, the contrast between Mona (Natalie Press) and Tamsin (Emily Blunt, then virtually unknown) is class-based rather than generational. As with *Twockers* and *Last Resort*, Pawlikowski showed little interest in strict realism, stripping out much of Cross's sociological detail and inventing the film's third character, Mona's born-again Christian brother (Considine).

An unexpected hiatus followed, with an adaptation of Magnus Mills's darkly comic novel *The Restraint of Beasts* partially shot in 2006, but abandoned due to a family tragedy. During this period, Pawlikowski was looking for an authentically Polish project, but his next feature was the Paris-set *The Woman in the Fifth*, which jettisoned much of Douglas Kennedy's page-turning thriller, significantly simplifying its convoluted plot, and focusing attention on its protagonist's psychological trauma rather than narrative incident. Although it had its fans, it opened to an uncharacteristically tepid critical and commercial reception.

Ida, however, has seen Pawlikowski bounce back with



a vengeance. Never one to move the camera too much, he and his cinematographers (camera operator Lukasz Zal took over from regular collaborator Lenczewski at a comparatively early stage) favour a series of stark, very carefully composed images, the action often pushed to the bottom or the side of the frame in order to devote much of it to background elements, particularly looming skies. Visually, it's as spare as anything by Dreyer or Bresson (editorially too: it runs just 79 minutes), with each shot giving off a similarly numinous charge. It's set in 1961, a time of glacial transition in Poland, where outright Stalinism had been ditched and a few Western influences were permitted (a jazz musician makes an 11th-hour appearance), but where lives were still rigidly circumscribed – something that applies to both Wanda, a prosecutor, and her niece Anna, a novice whose discovery about her family, her Jewish heritage and even her real name (the film's title) leads her to question a planned future that at the start of the film seemed enviably streamlined and straightforward. Both women struggle with their respective faiths – Wanda with communism, Ida with Catholicism – and it's this and the growing complexity of their relationship that prevents the film from being merely a simplistic meditation on history and the Holocaust. It's one of the strongest new Polish films in years, something that seems to have ruffled a few feathers locally, since Pawlikowski is well outside the country's stratified film establishment – but there may be a wider lesson there, too. 📌

ART AND COMMERCE
Ida (above) sees Pawlikowski disregarding traditional commercial imperatives by shooting in black-and-white Academy ratio, in Polish and without familiar names in his cast – and still delivering an unlikely box-office hit



Ida is released in UK cinemas on 26 September and is reviewed on page 72



MAKING FACES

Peter Lorre's first big on-screen role, as the grotesque pop-eyed child-killer in Fritz Lang's 'M', instantly marked him out as one of the all-time greats, but it also haunted him for the rest of his career, seeing him typecast in a series of films playing melancholy psychopaths and sadists

By Philip Kemp

"But I can't help it..." Don't I have this cursed thing inside of me? This fire, this voice, this agony? I can't escape from myself... But who'll believe me? Who knows what it's like inside me? How it screams and cries out inside me when I have to do it. Don't want to. *Must!* Don't want to. *Must!* Pop-eyed, pathetic, grotesque, his body and face twisted as if in agony, his voice modulating from a grovelling whine to a scream of tormented fury, a tell-tale 'M' (for murderer) still chalked on his back, the serial child-killer Hans Beckert cringes before a kangaroo court of grim-faced criminals, pleading for his life.

Even now, more than 80 years on, this culminating scene of Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) still enshrines a shattering performance, at once repellent and tragic, an anguished outpouring of compulsive psychopathy that's hard to watch yet impossible to turn away from. All the more astonishing is that it's the work of an actor who, barring a tiny unbilled part as a dental patient in an obscure silent movie (*Die verschwundene Frau*, 1929), had never previously appeared before the camera. With this single performance Lorre established himself beyond all doubt as one of the great screen actors. Chaplin, who saw *M* three times, hailed him as the greatest actor in Europe.

Yet as surely as *M*'s killer was trapped by his murderous compulsion, Lorre was trapped by the performance that made his name. Just as Anthony Perkins, after *Psycho*, was never able to escape Norman Bates, so Lorre could never wholly shake off Hans Beckert. Hollywood, having taken note of the film that shot him to fame, awaited his arrival, slapped an indelible 'M' (for melodrama) on his

back and set him to a career of playing sad-eyed psychopaths. Rarely was he given the chance to break out of the straitjacket. "Ever since I came to this country," Lorre observed years later, "I've been trying to live down my past. That picture *M* has haunted me everywhere I've gone."

His true bent, Lorre always reckoned, was for comedy, and many of his best roles after *M* offer a beguiling, unsettling mix of humour and menace. Hitchcock shrewdly latched on to this when he offered Lorre the role of Abbott, the gang leader in the 1934 version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. This was a last-minute inspiration: in the shooting script Abbott is described as "an elderly, genial Englishman of around 60", wearing gold-rimmed glasses – not at all like the *mittel*-European, 30-year-old Lorre. It was Hitchcock's associate producer Ivor Montagu who first suggested Lorre for the film, having heard that the actor – who, being of Austro-Hungarian Jewish stock, had prudently quit Germany in 1933 – was living in Paris in straitened circumstances.

Montagu, who along with his friends Sidney Bernstein and Michael Balcon actively worked to bring Jewish actors and technicians to England, introduced Lorre to Hitchcock, with the initial idea of casting him as the hitman eventually played by Frank Vosper. Hitch took to Lorre immediately, appreciating his deadpan sense of humour and taste for the incongruous. Lorre always maintained that at this stage his English was virtually non-existent but, knowing that Hitchcock loved to tell funny stories, "I always used to watch him like a hawk – and whenever I thought the end of a story

MIRROR, MIRROR
The Lost One (Der Verlorene, 1951), Peter Lorre's sole directorial outing, in which he also gives a devastating performance as a Nazi scientist and murderer (right), revealed his considerable talents behind as well as in front of the camera





was coming I used to roar with laughter. And somehow he got the impression I spoke English.”

This may well be no more than a well-honed anecdote, but at all events Lorre soon picked up the language and, though the studio took some convincing, Montagu and Hitchcock decided he would be ideal for the Abbott role. Lorre repaid their trust by giving one of his finest performances, switching subtly from coy affability to chilling menace. He appreciated the ambiguity of the role, as he hated being typecast as a blatant villain. “I had to be villain enough,” he later recalled, “for a child to instinctively dislike me, yet for grown-ups to see nothing out of the ordinary in me.” Charles Bennett, the film’s screenwriter, wrote: “Peter carried his personal gentleness into his characterisations, and this was a great part of his magic. He could kill... and still remain amusingly lovable.”

This ambiguity was always one of Lorre’s greatest strengths as an actor. Stocky and round-faced, his screen persona seemed a textbook illustration of schizophrenia: the wide-set hooded eyes, liquid and soulful, that could abruptly bulge with murderous rage or ungovernable terror; the voice, a soft middle-European whisper, pitching without warning into a shrill fury of frustration and hate; the cigarette drooping from sensual lips; the caged, prowling walk, driven by some intolerable restlessness of spirit. Lorre could effect the switch from genial to chilling with utmost subtlety; a twitch of the scalp, a spasm briefly contorting the mouth, and his shy vulnerable face would smooth into an inhuman mask.

ZEROES AND VILLAINS
Lorre in Fritz Lang’s *M* (above) and (opposite, clockwise from top left) with Raymond Massey and Cary Grant in *Arsenic and Old Lace*; with Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*; as Abbott in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*; and with Margaret Tallichet in *Stranger on the Third Floor*

Hitchcock, like Bennett, thoroughly enjoyed Lorre’s company as well as his performance, and cast him two years later in *Secret Agent* (1936) as a duplicitous hired killer called the Hairless Mexican “chiefly because he’s got a lot of curly hair and isn’t Mexican”, a flamboyantly overdressed assassin with a childlike smile; blithely amoral, he finds the mistaken-identity murder of an innocent victim a huge joke. By now, though, Lorre had launched his Hollywood career with *Mad Love* (1935), a remake of *The Hands of Orlac* from Maurice Renard’s much-adapted novel, previously filmed by Robert Wiene in 1924. His first appearance as the deranged Dr Gogol gave fair warning of the screen career to come: leaning forward from the darkness of a theatre box, moon-round face totally bald above a fur collar and neatly bisected by shadow, he gazed with depraved desire at the spectacle of Frances Drake being tortured on a wheel.

Graham Greene, writing in *World Film News*, found *Mad Love* (directed by cinematographer-turned-director Karl Freund) a “rather inferior melodrama”. (He was yet more disparaging about *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *Secret Agent*, but then Greene was never anything of a Hitchcock fan.) The comment appeared in his fulsome piece ‘The Genius of Peter Lorre’, where he wrote of Lorre in *M*: “I still remember the expression of despairing tenderness he turned on his small victim, the hapless struggle in his face against a habit he could not break.” Even in the “cheap Grand Guignol horror” of *Mad Love*, Greene noted, “It was to Lorre alone we owed the good-

PHOTOGRAPH BY GERALD COLLECTION (C)



ness, the tenderness of the vicious man. Those marble pupils in the pasty spherical head are like the eye-pieces of a microscope through which you can watch the tangled mind laid flat on the slide: love and lust, nobility and perversity, hatred of itself and despair jumping out at you from the jelly,” adding that “Lorre – perhaps it is a misfortune – can do almost anything”.

Hoping to persuade the Hollywood studios that he could indeed do almost anything, Lorre followed *Mad Love* with an excursion into world literature. He had long wanted to play Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, but the project as executed in 1935 was fatally ill-conceived. Josef von Sternberg, still mourning the eclipse of his personal and creative relationship with Dietrich, said he could see in it “no more than a film about a detective and a criminal... and when a director is called upon to direct a story and players over which he has had no choice, his contribution can be only a routine one”. Not surprisingly, in the face of Sternberg’s indifference, Lorre’s performance felt ill at ease and the film itself drab and lifeless. It flopped badly.

From his early 20s onwards, and virtually for the rest of his life, Lorre was addicted to morphine (and related drugs); the need to feed his addiction, and his improvidence with money, left him largely at the mercy of the studios. He could rarely hold out for the roles he wanted, nor turn down those he despised, and of his 80-odd screen credits (plus a stack of TV appearances) the vast majority used – as the *New York Times* observed – “his

tricks but not his talent”. Asked by Lotte Lenya, whom he had known from his early years in Berlin, what he was doing in Hollywood, Lorre responded sardonically, “Nothing. I make faces.”

But though typecast for the most part as psychopaths, spies and sadists, Lorre could bring individuality to the most hackneyed roles, transforming them (as David Thomson put it) “into portraits of delicate, deranged kindness, pushed to the point of frantic malice”. His urban killer in *Stranger on the Third Floor* (Boris Ingster, 1940 – often reckoned the first true *film noir*) murders seemingly without motive; yet when heroine Margaret Tallichet first encounters him, he’s half-apologetically buying meat to feed a stray dog. “He – he followed me for two blocks. I *had* to give him something to eat.”

Just occasionally Lorre was able to escape from playing evil. One such chance came – rather unexpectedly – in a run of cut-price B pictures from Fox. Having had several years of success with the Charlie Chan movies starring Warner Oland, the studio, seeking another lucrative franchise, snapped up the rights to John P. Marquand’s character Mr. Moto, a Japanese counter-espionage agent, and assigned the role to Lorre. (After all, given Hollywood’s carefree attitude to ethnicity, if the Swedish-born Verner Öhlund could play Chinese, why shouldn’t an Austro-Hungarian Jew play Japanese?) The director of most of the series, Norman Foster, initially had his doubts, as “Peter was so unlike the Japanese. Everything was wrong with him except the eyes.” He also learnt

Those marble pupils in the pasty spherical head are like the eye-pieces of a microscope through which you can watch the tangled mind laid flat on the slide



that Lorre was in an East Coast sanatorium undergoing treatment for drug addiction. Despite this, Lorre threw himself with amused gusto into the assignment, openly enjoying the far-fetched plots and outlandish disguises. The series ran for eight movies, from *Think Fast, Mr. Moto* (1937) to *Mr. Moto Takes a Vacation* (1939); by then Lorre had tired of the 'childish' role, and in later life he came to resent any reference to it.

He reverted to stylised villainy in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), joining a rich gallery of baddies (Sydney Greenstreet, Mary Astor, Elisha Cook Jr) for John Huston's directorial debut. High-camp, perfumed and querulous, his Joel Cairo fastidiously steals several scenes, including his first encounter with Bogart's Sam Spade. Huston appreciated Lorre unreservedly. "The flight of his talent was just unlimited... He had himself such a rich and varied personality that he could incorporate anything into it... He's always doing two things at the same time, thinking one thing and saying something else. And that's when he's at his best." *Falcon* led to a lifelong friendship with Bogart, and an onscreen partnership with the stately, orotund Greenstreet for eight more movies, playing off the British actor's vast urbanity against his own scuttling nervousness like a *noir*-tinged Laurel and Hardy.

There's a similarly fruitful play of opposites in the teaming of Lorre, as squeamish plastic surgeon Dr Einstein, with Raymond Massey's hulking, malevolent Jonathan Brewster in Frank Capra's *Arsenic and Old Lace* (shot in 1941, but not released until 1944). Einstein's desperate attempts to rein in Jonathan's more gruesome homicidal impulses ("No! Not the Melbourne method!") delectably enrich the film's black comedy. Capra, delighted, gave Lorre his head to improvise. "You could give him a little bit of a part and he'd just milk it and add to it and be that character... That is acting before your eyes!"

Lorre was reunited with Bogart for *Casablanca* (1942), playing Ugarte, a weaselly dealer in black-market visas. He departs the film far too early, but there's time for some relishable exchanges with Bogart's Rick. (Ugarte: "You despise me, don't you?" Rick: "Well, if I gave you any thought, I probably would.") As ever, Lorre brings a subversive charm to his villainy that makes his character impossible to dislike. Lorre's own sense of humour was irrepressible, which didn't always endear him to studio executives. While he was playing a Nazi officer in Tay Garnett's *The Cross of Lorraine* (1943), Louis B. Mayer invaded the set with a group of Washington top brass. Summoning Lorre over, Mayer commented, "It seems strange to see you in a Gestapo uniform. How do you keep yourself in character?" Lorre looked him in the eye and responded, "I eat a Jew every morning for breakfast."

Incidents like this probably weren't the sole reason that, as the decade progressed, the quality and quantity of Lorre's roles dried up. It seems likely, as the anti-communist witch-hunt tightened its hold on Hollywood, that he was 'greylisted' thanks to his well-known friendship with Bertolt Brecht. From 1947-49 he appeared in only one film a year. Radio and television partly plugged the gap, but it was chiefly the dearth of movie offers that inspired Lorre to realise a long-held ambition: to return to Europe and direct a film of his own.

Despite his frequently expressed desire to escape the shadow of *M* and play comedy, there's precious little humour in *The Lost One* (*Der Verlorene*, 1951), which



in many ways harks back to Lang's film. Lorre plays a doctor working after the war, under an assumed name, in a displaced-persons camp near Hamburg; during the war he carried out secret bacteriological research for the Nazis. The arrival of a former wartime associate sparks a series of flashbacks. Told by his Nazi handlers that his fiancée has betrayed his findings to London, he goes home and strangles her; unhinged by this, he becomes a serial killer.

On the strength of *The Lost One*, Lorre had it in him to become a considerable director. The film has its flaws – the acting is uneven and Willy Schmidt-Gentner's score is obtrusively melodramatic – but the mood is intense and the handling of the multiple flashbacks sure-footed. And in the lead role Lorre is as powerful as he ever was. The wordless scene where he strangles his fiancée plays out almost entirely on his face, and the complex of emotions – anger, weariness, grief, tenderness, despair – is conveyed with breathtaking subtlety. But the film, though garnering some favourable reviews, was poorly received by German audiences, repelled by its unrelieved pessimism, and foreign distributors showed little interest. It wasn't shown in the USA until 1983.

The final decade of Lorre's career was a slow decline. Back in America, his health deteriorating and his weight ballooning, he wandered with resigned sadness through some wretchedly bad movies. There were occasional compensations: reuniting with Huston and Bogart on the shaggy-dog picaresque of *Beat the Devil* (1953), improvising his own dialogue for the full-blooded gothickry of Roger Corman's Poe movies. But his death in 1964, aged only 59, seemed a release. Few if any of his numerous films did him full justice. One of the most individual and skilful of screen actors, he was trapped as much as he was singled out by his own utterly distinctive physique. 📌

i Fritz Lang's *M* is rereleased in UK cinemas on 5 September. A season of 22 Peter Lorre films is running at BFI Southbank, London, until 7 October

The flight of his talent was just unlimited... He's always doing two things at the same time, thinking one thing and saying something else. And that's when he's at his best

PUNCH DRUNK
Peter Lorre's camp and querulous Joel Cairo falls foul of Humphrey Bogart's Sam Spade in John Huston's 1941 feature debut *The Maltese Falcon* (above)

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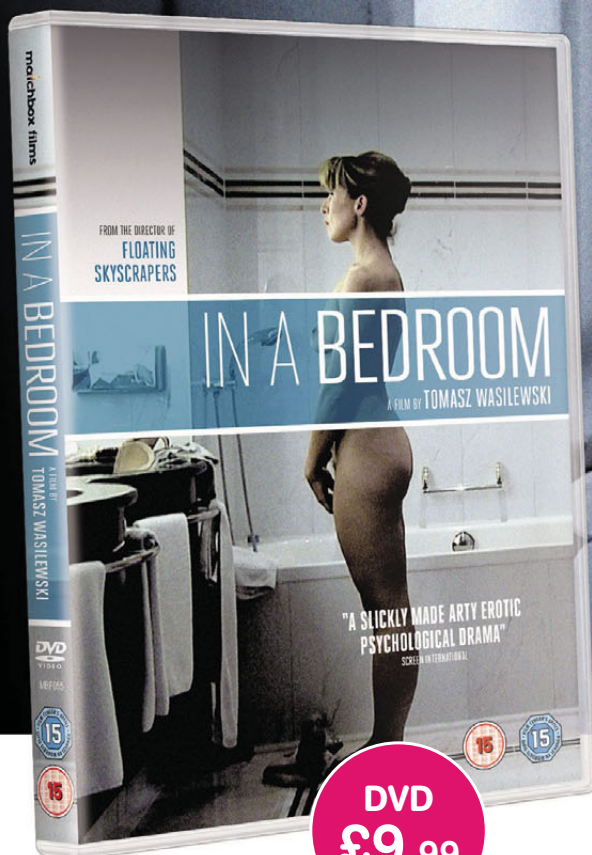
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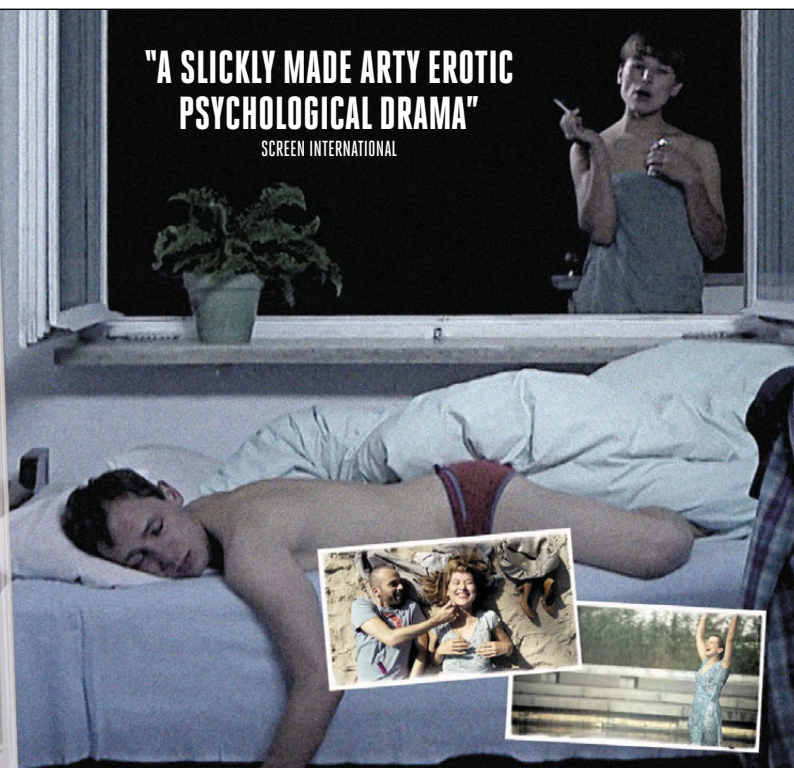
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David Cronenberg's vicious Hollywood satire 'Maps to the Stars' is powered by a blistering performance by Julianne Moore as a self-obsessed actress living in the shadow of her late movie star mother. Here the director explains why Tinseltown finds it so hard to escape the spectres of its past

By Nick James

Satires on Hollywood have to deal with a well-worn dichotomy: Hollywood is ever-changing; Hollywood remains the same. The novels of Bruce Wagner keep pace with the morphing personalities and cascading ephemera of movie celebrity culture; his *Dead Stars*, for instance, is a heady swirl of social media celeb referencing. Hence there is more than enough la-la perversity in Wagner's fiction to have enticed David Cronenberg to film the Wagner script *Maps to the Stars*, a tart satire that the director says is "a sort of condensed essence of Bruce". One of the film's charms is its hotel lobby-culture vacuity, yet it has clear links to the verities of Hollywood satires past from *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952) to *The Player* (1992) to *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005).

Maps is a suitably twisted psychodrama that begins with a classic idea: a bus is bringing a new bright young thing to town. But Agatha (Mia Wasikowska) is distinguished by the long black leather gloves that cover her arms and by signs of scarring on her neck, hardly characteristics of a wannabe starlet, though she seems winning in person when she meets up with limo chauffeur Jerome Fontana (Robert Pattinson). Agatha's *ingénue* charm soon sees her land a job as a personal assistant managing the high-anxiety life of veteran actress Havana Segrand (Julianne Moore), the central figure in a soap opera-like world of frenzied self-obsession that plays out in

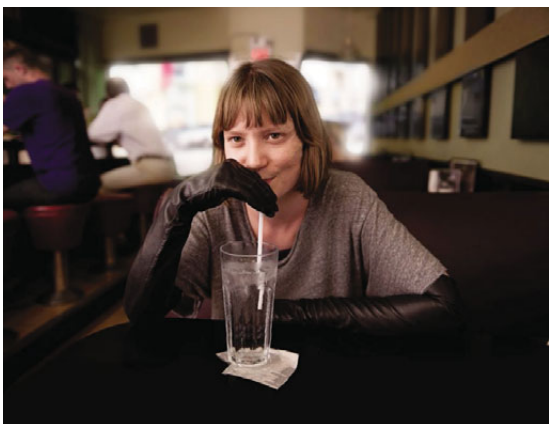
well-appointed, hyper-real anonymous rooms. Havana is desperate to land the lead role in a remake of a film that originally starred her mother, Clarice Taggart, a true Hollywood legend. Some of the best scenes in *Maps* involve Havana flip-flopping between shrieking semi-private hysteria and monumentally hypocritical public chit-chat with her peers.

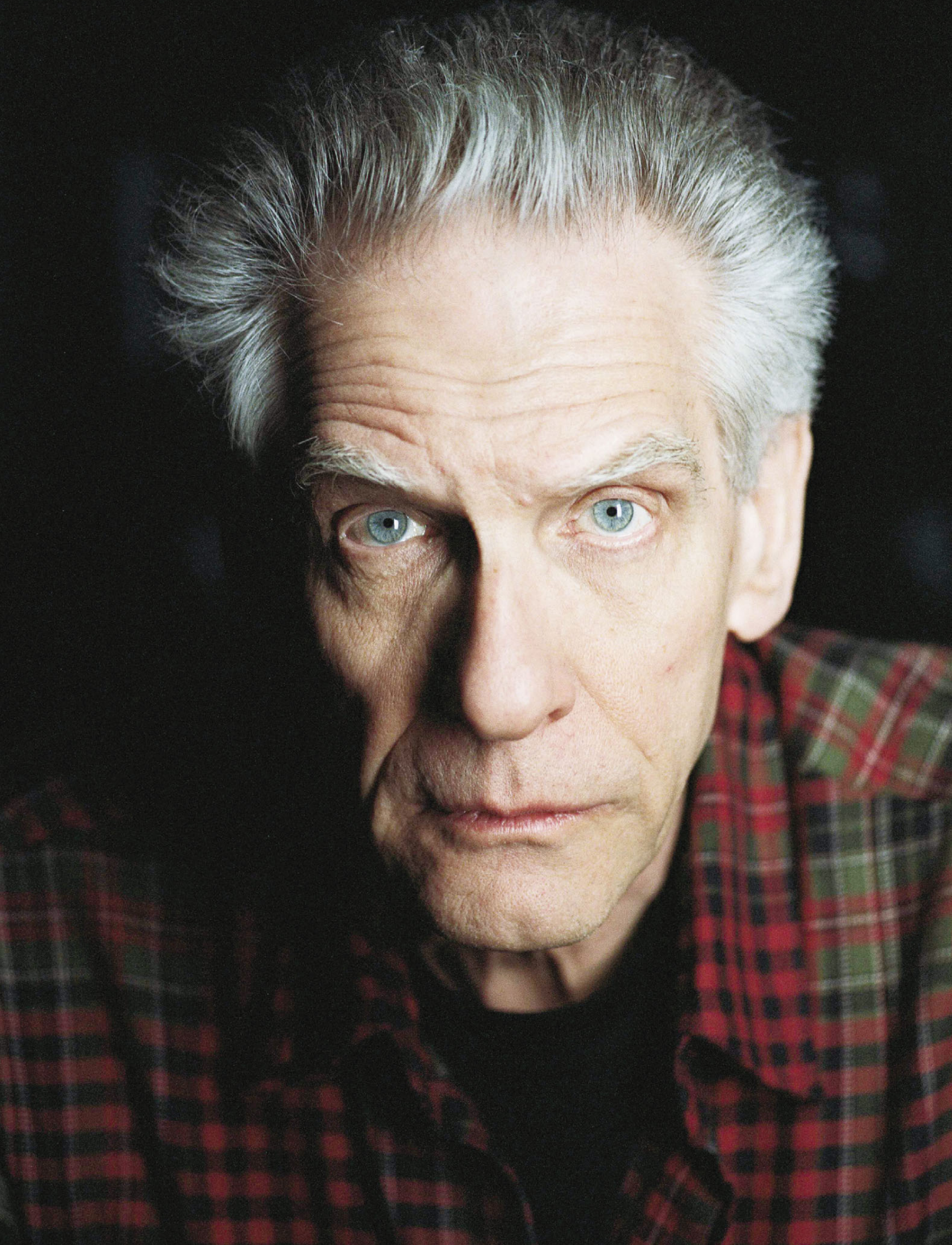
Weaving in and out of Havana's life are the toxic family of her psychotherapist and life coach Dr Stafford Weiss (John Cusack), whose take-no-prisoners wife Cristina (Olivia Williams) manages their Justin Bieber-like child actor son Benjie (Evan Bird), a walking pimple of arrogance and nastiness. His career as the star of *Bad Babysitter* is on the skids after a spell in rehab from alcohol abuse problems has led him to be saddled with a cuter kid co-star for the sequel. His existence becomes sourer still when a cancer patient he visited and mistook for an HIV victim dies and comes back to haunt him. While Havana rides her mood swings, Agatha's past connection to the tribe slowly reveals itself.

I talked to Cronenberg at this year's Cannes Film Festival. Despite his renown, it had taken him six years to make *Maps to the Stars* a viable proposition. The film got a mixed reception from the press there, but Julianne Moore won Best Actress for her intense portrayal of the keyed-up diva Havana. ➡

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK
Maps to the Stars, directed by David Cronenberg (right), is a twisted psychodrama set in Hollywood starring Mia Wasikowska as Agatha (below), a bright young thing newly arrived in Los Angeles

GHOST WORLD





Nick James: Did you find making a film about Hollywood a liberating experience?

David Cronenberg: Yeah. But it's part of Bruce Wagner's writing really. Hollywood is really his subject. He's written nine novels [set there]. He's a wonderful writer. They call Hollywood the dream factory – they used to anyway – so when I think of the ghosts [in the film], I don't think of them as literal ghosts, I think of them as memory ghosts.

Hollywood is haunted by James Dean, by Marilyn Monroe, by the imagery, by the ghosts that float off the screen into everybody's minds and lives. Those ghosts haunt people all around the world but nowhere more than in Hollywood because of the potency of those people, those images, especially the ones who died young but not only – look at Humphrey Bogart. It just seemed very rich and very natural to blend those levels.

NJ: Did you have any rules for how you'd approach it?

DC: I really had no rules – well, that's not true. I said to my actors, "The elements of satire, of humour, of exaggeration, are in the script, we don't have to address those. Leave those alone. I want you to play it for the human emotional reality of everything – very low key, no grandstanding – because it's there, it will take care of itself."

And for myself, it's not a rule but I do find my cinema has become very ascetic and simple and straightforward, and some of my actors – especially Mia [Wasikowska] – were shocked that I would do one or two takes and that's it, preferably one. And long takes, not in terms of being bravura long takes, but not moving the camera unless there's a reason, not doing multiple angles and lenses on a close-up.

The scene with Mia and Rob [Pattinson] in the diner, for instance, it's two shots, that's it. It's two set ups, one or two takes each. It takes more to find the location and set it up and do the green screen so that it looks like Hollywood Boulevard, even though you're shooting in Toronto. So there's a lot going on, but in terms of the actual shooting, it's very simple.

In a way that was my directorial version of the advice that I gave to the actors: it's clear, very simple and real and that kind of balances the more extravagant elements that are there in the script.

NJ: It's particularly vivid in the very real presences of the ghosts.

DC: Yes, I didn't want the ghosts to feel like ghosts. I wanted them to feel real because that's what they feel like to the people [who see them]. The reason they're scary is because they feel real. Bruce originally had some scenes in the film that had dead children walking down the street at night and I said, "Bruce, this is wrong because those are the ghosts that people who believe in an after-life would see and I don't buy that, I don't believe it and also it's wrong for the movie." These are [movie] people who are haunted by people they know, people they have guilt about and unfinished arguments with, like your real mother. That's who they are and those are the kind of ghosts that I've experienced, which are really memories.

The only thing I would do once in a while is, for example, when Clarice [Havana Segrand's late film star mother] comes out of the tub, you don't hear the sound of the water, and when the ghost kids dive into the swimming pool, you don't hear it and they kind of disappear. That was my acknowledgement of not going any further



with blue light or shimmering light or diffused light or something to make them more ghostlike.

NJ: And this asceticism is there because you feel you know exactly the simplicity you require?

DC: It actually started as far back as *The Fly*. I just started to realise that *The Fly*, for all the effects and everything, was really just three people in a room. And I thought, I'm not going to fight that. I mean, let's make it a big interesting room – there have been tons of movies since then that have been made in warehouses, but then it was unique. It started to make me think that I was Samuel Beckett. Just one of many delusions, but I like the Beckettian approach to theatre, taking the idea of how simple you could go to the point where a play is just a mouth speaking and nothing else. I have not gone that far but, in my own way, I've gradually approached that – how much can you strip away and have it still be vital and completely alive? I certainly did that with the last several movies, and more with this one.

NJ: I was intrigued by the Stafford Weiss character, the psychotherapist who believes that memories can be lodged in particular parts of the body. Where did he come from?

DC: That comes from Bruce's experience of therapy. Bruce has been in rehab, he's been in various therapies, he's a denizen of LA and he knows what happens. He can see the charlatanism that's still seductive. You know the guy's a charlatan, but you're thinking that he might be on to something because when he presses that muscle, I cry. I blurt out. I sob. And so there is some kind of memory, perhaps, that is locked in a muscle, that's physical. A very clever conman is one who cons himself. He believes that

THE FAULT IN OUR STARS
Robert Pattinson plays limo driver and wannabe actor Jerome Fontana (above); Julianne Moore plays Havana Segrand (top right), with Mia Wasikowska as her assistant Agatha (centre right); and John Cusack plays quack therapist Stafford Weiss (bottom right)

he can do this stuff even though he knows he's a shill at the same time. I've seen that in my interaction with Hollywood. I've never lived there, but I've been going back and forth for 40 years and I've heard stories of conmen taking advantage of very clever people, who are so vulnerable in some ways. This is what this guy is and he's trying to create an empire out of ersatz physiotherapy and psychotherapy, and a lot of platitudes.

NJ: Given that they are Hollywood actors, did your cast take to the satire with alacrity?

DC: None of them is really a Hollywood actor. John [Cusack] lives in Chicago deliberately, and Julie [Julianne Moore] lives in New York and Mia [Wasikowska] does, and so they have some distance. They all have had some brushes with Hollywood and, of course, in terms of Julie, she's done some huge movies and continues to do so. She's been right in the mouth of the devil. But it would probably be cathartic [for them] to do that. John said, "I was Benjie." He was a young star and he can summon up the pressure of that. Undoubtedly that's why he went back home to Chicago because he doesn't have to live in it. You have to deal with it. These are wise actors. Julie has a wonderful career, still, at the age of 53, but she grew up with women who have disappeared [from films]. They don't exist in Hollywood and they were huge before. The names easily come to mind.

NJ: Were you worried that much of the audience might take the film too straight, as if it was a kind of *Melrose Place*?

DC: I don't worry about any of that stuff, but I am bemused and always surprised because I never know what reaction I'm going to get. I know what I'm creating, but that's almost an objective thing. But the relationship with the audience is very subjective. We've got some rave reviews, but we've also got some very nasty negative reviews as well. The preponderance is good but, thank God, we've got some bad ones. I would start to worry. The only movie that got 100 per cent good reviews was *E.T.* or something, a movie I didn't like when I saw it and still don't.

Honestly, it feels like you're creating a complex organic thing that will have a life of its own when it's out there and you cannot help but think of it as a child. At a certain point you have to let go. Your child goes out and has a relationship with the world that you are not part of and not controlling. Obviously it's so unusual [for me] to have had a million reviews and tweets about your film before your premiere [in Cannes]. That didn't exist just a couple of years ago. But that's what's exciting about it. You've created it, you let it go and it can definitely surprise you.

NJ: And it took such a long time to get made.

DC: It's not that I had a desire to do an exposé of Hollywood or do anything about filmmaking – in fact, I kind of avoided that. [I did it] because of Bruce's script and my love of his work. That was the seduction and I read it, definitely ten years ago, talked to Julie about it eight years ago. Bruce and I were constantly updating it because there are many pop references that then become obsolete. There weren't even cellphones when he wrote it, so that changes it immediately.

NJ: And now there's Justin Bieber.

DC: Yeah. Canadian too. There's always a Justin Bieber. You know that. ☺

i **Maps to the Stars** is released in UK cinemas on 26 September and is reviewed on page 80



Thank God, we've got some bad reviews too. The only movie that got 100 per cent good reviews was 'E.T.' or something, a movie I didn't like when I saw it and still don't



PROFILE

MARGINAL REVOLUTIONARY

Ozualdo Ribeiro Candeias spent nearly 40 years portraying Brazil's forgotten poor – and has been all but forgotten himself

By Aaron Cutler

A rowing boat drifts towards the margin of São Paulo's Tietê river. People on shore stare as it passes by; we might imagine that we are its passengers. This impression remains even after the boat moors and a woman disembarks. Four people, apparently two couples, gather around their new visitor; but she soon vanishes from *The Margin* (A *margin*, 1967), Ozualdo Ribeiro Candeias's debut feature, while the margin's residents carry on gazing into the camera, as if we have been left to move about in her place.

The film follows its four central, largely silent figures as they roam this impoverished part of the city, then themselves depart by boat. They are a pudgy, nervous-looking man (played by Mario Benvenuti) in a rumpled white suit; a barefoot, seductively posing woman (Valéria Vidal) who accompanies him; a younger woman (Lucy Rangel) exploited by men in her search for secretarial work; and a saintly, flower-bearing fool (Bentinho), smitten with her, who darts through his surroundings with a dancer's

grace. Dwellers in shanty-town houses direct a full, steady gaze at passers-by, sometimes welcoming them, sometimes asking for help.

The Margin presents its people in startlingly straightforward fashion, forcing us into an intimacy with them while allowing them to keep their distance from us. As in later films, Candeias created a thin layer of fiction in order for viewers to look past it and see a greater reality. By making his black-and-white film as a series of essentially silent movements, with a musical soundtrack underlining wordless scenes, he left viewers with poetic space to imagine what life in the margins of the world might feel like.

Several scenes from *The Margin* appear in the recent documentary *Ozualdo Candeias and the Cinema* (2013), a feature-length compilation film directed by Eugênio Puppo which excerpts works from throughout Candeias's career. The bulk of Candeias's films – made between 1955 and 1993 – are out of circulation today, even in his native Brazil. Puppo's production company, Heco Produções, is preparing an all-region DVD box set of Candeias's films for release in late 2015. In the meantime, the documentary allows viewers to familiarise themselves with the work of one of the greatest Brazilian filmmakers.

It also introduces them to Candeias himself, who died in 2007, aged 85. Archive audio captures a larger-than-life figure who insisted on doing

as many jobs on his films as possible, including writing, directing, producing, cinematography and editing. Candeias once said he wouldn't take advice on filmmaking because he didn't want to make anyone's mistakes but his own.

On release, *The Margin* was a critical and commercial success, celebrated as a rare film that showed the problems of Brazil's largest city. (The contemporaneous Cinema Novo movement was centred on Rio de Janeiro.) It inspired a brief but rich period of experimental Brazilian filmmaking, known today as Cinema Marginal, much of whose activity took place in Boca do Lixo ('Mouth of Garbage'), the downtown São Paulo area where Candeias lived, and which he chronicled in films and photographs.

Candeias did not consider himself an innovator, and claimed no disciples. He rejected suggestions of influence, too, claiming not to have seen the European films to which his critics made reference. He said that he had little interest in watching films, taking inspiration from what he had seen during his daily work.

Candeias said that he had little interest in watching films, taking inspiration from what he had seen during his daily work



Country girls: the field-workers turned roadside prostitutes in *The Option* (1981), winner of the Bronze Leopard at the Locarno festival

He was born in 1922 to impoverished farmers, who moved frequently between the states of Mato Grosso and São Paulo, where Candeias eventually settled. When young he worked at a number of jobs, including as a trucker, a figure who often appears in his films, travelling between city and countryside. His first short films were made with a Keystone 16mm camera, which he learned how to operate by reading every manual he could find. He chose his chief themes early on. His first documentary short, *Tambaú, City of Miracles* (*Tambaú, a cidade dos milagres*, 1955), juxtaposed the work of a faith-healer priest with shots of the impoverished pilgrims travelling to be healed of sickness and wounds.

Candeias attended film school classes in São Paulo prior to making *The Margin*. He also played various roles, in front of and behind the camera, for the actor-director José Mojica Marins, whose highly imaginative low-budget horror films featuring the monstrous 'Coffin Joe' offered crucial filmmaking models for Candeias and other Cinema Marginal artists early in Brazil's period of military dictatorship, which lasted from 1964 to 1985.

Candeias's approach in *The Margin* and subsequent fiction films was to write a basic treatment that was staged by a mixture of trained and untrained actors and developed during the film shoot. The films feel fresh partly because they were invented moment to moment. Their sequences flow intuitively, resulting in story progressions that often feel more rhythmic than narrative.

This held true even when Candeias worked within established genres: horror with *The Agreement* (*O acordo*, a segment of the *Trilogy of Terror*; 1968, co-directed with Marins and Luís Sérgio Person) and the western with *My Name is Tonho* (*Meu nome é Tonho*, 1969). His 1970 version of *Hamlet*, *A herança* (the title translates as *The Inheritance*), reimagines the play on a farm, preserving none of Shakespeare's dialogue except one song and a few strategically placed subtitles. Instead, the story unfolds through movements between its actors' expressive faces, achieved with perfectly synchronised cuts and zooms, while guitar notes float by.

The shift renders the quest of the wealthy landowner's son to avenge his murdered father far more active than contemplative, and locates a strong political dimension. Shakespeare's Hamlet wins the audience's sympathy primarily through speaking more, and more eloquently, than the other characters. Candeias balances the concerns of 'Omeleto' (David Cardoso) with those of the people around him, even weighing in on their side when they suffer because of his violent impulses. Brazil's history of slavery is invoked by casting actors of discernibly African descent as the film's counterparts to Polonius, Laertes and Ophelia, making them black servants killed or driven mad by a white master. The country's feudal system of land ownership – centuries old and still extant in parts of Brazil at the time of the film's release – is alluded to through the continual presence of serfs, as witnesses to their ruling family's drama. The system is rebuked at the end by the announcement that the estate will go not to the hitherto absent



Ozualdo Ribeiro Candeias

cousin Fortinbras, but rather to its workers.

This was an unusually utopian ending for Candeias, who more often than not portrayed people with power abusing those without. Films such as *My Name is Tonho* and *Manelão, the Ear Hunter* (*Manelão, o caçador de orelhas*, 1982) show rural families either as living under threat from armed bandits, or merely as bodies to be carted away in piles. In *Bloody Hunt* (*Caçada sangrenta*, 1974), an urban fugitive kidnaps and brutalises a woman in a verdant part of Mato Grosso that is being deforested to build a highway. The film uses elements of exploitation thrillers, but with an eye on the background, placing male violence against women within a broader context of people damaging natural environments and ways of life indigenous to them.

Bloody Hunt was banned by censors, like many films made during the dictatorship era, including Candeias's shorts *Zézero* (1974), *O Candinho* (1976), and *A visita do velho senhor* (*The Old Man's Visit*, 1976). The depiction in this last film of a prostitute's final moments can be seen as laying the ground for *The Option* (*A opção, ou*

rosas da estrada, 1981), a Bronze Leopard winner at Locarno, and often considered Candeias's masterpiece. *The Option* elliptically narrates the travels of an ensemble of young rural women who leave the sugar cane fields to work as roadside prostitutes, following them as they hitchhike by truck from the north-east down to São Paulo.

Like Mizoguchi Kenji – whose compassionate films about geishas were informed by frequent brothel visits – Candeias brought his personal experiences with roadside prostitutes into these women's stories, even casting himself as one of the girls' customers. The resulting film, like *The Margin*, gives a series of direct and sympathetic portraits of people stuck on the fringe.

The Option reiterates the same basic situation: a customer picks up a young woman, who enjoys herself with him until he turns frighteningly aggressive. As the girl flees or struggles, Candeias cuts back to the road. Each time, the film's action moves further along the highway, while leaving us feeling no progress has been made. Physical violence is largely implicit. We rarely see the women again afterwards.

Candeias made four features after *The Option*, three of which – *Manelão*, *The Nun and the Torture* (*A freira e a tortura*, 1983) and *The Vigilante* (*O vigilante*, 1992) contain graphic sequences of rape and murder, with no honest policemen anywhere to be seen and vengeance failing to satisfy those who resort to it. The fourth film, a tale of interfamilial conflict called *The Beauties of Billings* (*As bellas do Billings*, 1987), presents no bloodshed but numerous images of waste. We see young women whose primes are wasted by their conservative parents' insistence that they stay home and behave themselves; a vivid gallery of people wasting away in the Boca do Lixo from lack of homes and nourishment; and a closing sequence that depicts heaps of food to be thrown away, with a female voice complaining "This is why things don't move forward."

Candeias was making points about a society that he felt treated human lives as disposable. While other Brazilian artists greeted the end of dictatorship with hope, Candeias believed that for those on society's margins things hadn't improved; and throughout his life he used cinema to bring their problems to wider attention. 📽



Waiting at the church: Valéria Vidal in *The Margin*, 1967

BLUE IS THE COOLEST COLOUR

The movies have always loved the sound of jazz. What they're not so keen on is what the music means, and the pain that lies behind it

By Daniel Barrow

In *Fading Gigolo*, as Fioravante (John Turturro), the florist-turned-escort of the title, reposes at the bar, his improbable Park Avenue dermatologist client, played by Sharon Stone, wanders over and asks whether he wants to join her – and her husband. On stage is a Latin jazz group. Barely ruffled, he tells her, “Another evening.” Turturro’s character seems emotionally to float outside the drama. Music becomes a means of creating distance: it provides another object, real (a band, a record) or imagined (the body of a song as double of the loved one) to focus on; ardour slows down within its compass, as if breath and nerves were rearranging their tempo – as in ‘My Romance’, one of the fine ballad performances by Gene Ammons on the soundtrack. In the hands of another soloist – Dexter Gordon, Miles Davis – that stillness might take on an air of fatality, the fixed look of cool become the skull showing beneath the skin.

By the arrival of bebop in the late 1940s jazz already had a visual identity, soon to be intensified by a new existential glamour and the post-war media matrix and youth culture necessary to propagate it. The young Max Roach typified it: dark suit, dark glasses, posture of restraint and concentration; a repudiation of myths of black wildness and dishevelment, which the industry nonetheless catered to in nightclubs. But this was always at the expense of the music itself, so slippery and deliciously ambiguous, as ambient and depersonalised as film sound itself.

Jazz had appeared on film as soon as sound, but already compromised: in *The Jazz Singer* Al Jolson, in jarring blackface – minstrel shows had no place in the black showbusiness world that incubated jazz – had warbled his way to success in songs that owed little to jazz itself. Jazz appears throughout dramas, gangster pictures and screwball comedies of the 1930s as something ornamental, an accompaniment to Warners’ and Paramount’s art deco sets. A carapace of metropolitan elegance and the gurn of vaudeville clowning were necessary to give an inoffensive visual shape to music that was, with its origins in perpetually ravaged community experiences, anathema to the individualism of classical Hollywood. Even, later, for the existentialists and their near-contemporaries in America, the Beats, who seized on jazzmen as figures in whom were intertwined modernity, authenticity and freedom, the reality behind the music was a problem. Expression itself functioned as a mask (“your eyes”, Geoff Dyer writes of pianist Bud Powell in *But Beautiful*, “acting like sunglasses, concealing what lies behind them”); the process of turning musicians into ‘icons’, culture heroes, characters with agency and conviction, simultaneously worked, in the case of Powell and Charlie Parker, to entangle them in new racial myths and in effect destroy them. They played the role of suffering instinctive genius too well, through addiction, alcoholism and mental collapse.



Existential chic: Philippe Torreton as philosopher Jean-Sol Partre in *Mood Indigo*

Again and again, music and musicians are reduced to local colour or cheap psychological symbols. (Compare the musicians of Robert Altman’s *Nashville*, given the garrulous space to display their contradictions.) In Boris Vian’s 1947 novel *L’Ecume des jours*, the tension between fantasy and the realities of death and poverty is represented by Duke Ellington’s music; in *Mood Indigo*, Michel Gondry’s recent adaptation, it dissipates in curlicues of CGI whimsy. In Walter Salles’s *On the Road* (2012), a nightclub performance functions as a backdrop for Sal (Sam Riley) and Dean (Garrett Hedlund) to recover a repressed energy still to be found in their racial Other, less the work of skilled and disciplined musicians than the kind of *mêlée* that would have got a black club shut down. In an early sequence in *Lost Highway* saxophonist Fred Madison (Bill

The music in ‘Bird’ is a golden screen through which the action shimmers, the sonic body of a questing intelligence

Pullman) plays thunderously as an expression of the film’s own cloud of psychic torment, barely distinguishable from the anonymous rock grind of the club in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*. It’s a problem dissected mid-flow in Clint Eastwood’s biopic of Parker, *Bird* (1988). Sitting on the beach at a post-gig party, Dizzy Gillespie (Samuel E. Wright) tells Bird (a magnificent Forest Whitaker) that his infamy – “they gonna remember you when you dead” – means little in the face of the trap he’s allowed himself to be lured



Forest Whitaker in *Bird*



Chet Baker in *Let's Get Lost*

into, of a curtailed creative life. As Ian Penman writes: "They want him to be the messed-up nigger, the unreliable Dionysian screw-up; want him on the junk heap so that the false opposition between High and Low culture can be."

Bird gets round the problem not only through the attentive period detail of Edward C. Carfagno's production design and the flight patterns of Joel Oliansky's script, which shies away from a cradle-to-grave tragic arc in favour of flickers of memory, but through its treatment of the music. In the performance sections, Parker's alto saxophone parts were retained from recordings, with new backing added. The strategy leaves the music both foregrounded – a golden screen through which the action shimmers, the sonic body of a questing intelligence – and backgrounded: something that leaks and hovers through the darkness of memory or reverie. Bird's motivations are opaque, the secret of his transformation into the most innovative altoist in history, the traumas that drove him to heroin, never disclosed. But in a scene in the car with his wife Chan (Diane Venora), the radio playing King Pleasure's "corny" vocal version of Bird's instrumental 'Parker's Mood', he pleads with her to keep it on and the two of them simply drive, the dark road and the music scrolling on. The song's slow drift – the lyrics' crude nostalgia for Parker's hometown exploiting his own melodic invention – says more about the texture of his life, the bitter savour of his triumph, than anything else in the film.

Fading Gigolo and *Bird* find an odd partner in *Let's Get Lost* (1988), Bruce Weber's documentary about trumpeter Chet Baker, filmed shortly before Baker's death. The teen-idol looks that made Baker a star in the 1950s were by this time shattered by decades of addiction. He's a black-clad skeleton, skin held on by a ripple of thin hair and seedy moustache; having lost his teeth, he needed dentures to play. His ice-blue tone and stylistic restraint had played a key part in the increasingly cool (in both senses) composition of jazz after bop, a music of glassy regret and yearning. Weber's film half-ironically indulges, in lush monochrome scenes of gentle revelry drenched in California light, in the fantasy that followed Baker's work and recurs in *Fading Gigolo*: of jazz as a space of fancy where the world's demands are suspended or barricaded out. Music is everywhere and nowhere in the film, Baker's notes the air we breathe. But the toll of maintaining the dream is clear: an endless succession of girls, tunes, fixes, needle scars, slipping away into the long and silent night. ☹



Bill Pullman in *Lost Highway*

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA

A tale of early piracy that is a good deal more Blackburn than Blackbeard

By Bryony Dixon

There is a romance to the early days of any industry, full of invention, colourful characters and sharp practice. Here's a story of the infant business that came to light during the early stages of digitising our earliest films for the new BFI Player. First to go online was the entirety of the Mitchell and Kenyon collection, which readers will remember was a cache of 800-plus nitrate negatives discovered in 2005 in a photographic shop in Blackburn. These were mainly local films commissioned by showmen for exhibition in fairground booths, but at the bottom of the barrels, curators found several pieces of film unlike the others. Among these oddities, which we have called Edwardian Enigmas, are inexplicable shots of Chinese men standing outside a building that could be in Shanghai or Surrey, and a comic act by an unknown music-hall performer in Edinburgh; but one film was identified immediately by the film historian Luke McKernan, who contacted us to say that our enigma was *A Morning Wash* (1900), attributed to 'Gibbons' Bio-Tableaux'.

The film is a comic sketch starring Walter Gibbons himself, the producer of the Bio-Tableaux, and his chief operator Jack Smith, joshing about at their morning ablutions: Gibbons hands his mate boot-blackening instead of soap. Not the most sophisticated gag but, like a number of other black-and-white gags (such as the 1897 *The Miller and the Sweep*), it worked well on screen. The Archive already had a print of the film from one source, datable to the 1900s, and now this original negative from the Mitchell and Kenyon cache. Forensic examination of the two pieces of film found that the negative was the camera original and that the print can only have been made from this negative – very unusual, given that films of this era had a survival rate of 15 per cent. We know M&K didn't make the film – it would have been shot in London – so what was the negative doing in the north of England?

Further digging reveals more about the colourful Walter Gibbons, a likely lad who quit work in a nail factory in Wolverhampton to tour the country as a singer before grabbing the lucrative opportunities offered by exhibiting, then making films in London. He was a handsome charmer, but also an innovator, pioneering sound film – one example, *Kitty Mahone* (1900), survives at the BFI – and early attempts to film theatrical spectacles using artificial lighting. He allegedly got into a spot of bother with Queen Victoria for showing a film of the funeral of her favourite nephew, and was later nabbed by Charles Urban, then manager of the Warwick Trading Co, for pirating films. There was a connection

The film was shot in London – so what was the negative doing in the north of England?



Negative reaction: *A Morning Wash*

with M&K through Gibbons's associate A.D. Thomas, a flamboyant showman who was not above passing himself off as Thomas Edison; both he and Gibbons exhibited in Islington at one time, and Thomas showed films made for him by M&K, among others.

Perhaps A.D. Thomas was secretly doing dodgy dubs of Gibbons's *A Morning Wash* at M&K's lab as he travelled between north and south; perhaps it was legit. Perhaps Gibbons was using M&K to print up his own films – and maybe other people's as well. Whatever the truth, the boys fell foul of the pugnacious American Charles Urban, as we can see in this extract from his memoirs (here quoted from McKernan's website www.charlesurban.com):

"...I succeeded in waylaying Thomas [that's A.D.] emerging from the Islington Empire after the show one night and hung on to him like 'grim death'. He was returning to the St Pancras Hotel to pick up his bag and take a train north from Paddington. I persuaded him to defer his departure until morning as he and I had a bit of business to transact that night. He was a big strong chap who could have made a nasty customer in a fight. We stopped the cab at Warwick Court, entered our office and while I put Thomas 'on his honour' I went into the packing room, got a chisel and a hatchet with some tacks which I showed to Thomas with the hint that I would not hesitate to use these tools, if he tried any nonsense. I told him we were bound for Chandos Street. He tried to assure me that Gibbons had given up the quarters, had removed all machines and developing equipment and that we would find an empty loft... The result of this search was three short duplicated films even bearing the Warwick trade mark at each beginning. I now had the evidence I wanted – even more so – I could now hold Gibbons for forging the company's trade mark by photography... For [Thomas's] help, I promised not to prosecute him... Early next morning I took my evidence to the office of our company's solicitor and had a summons prepared..."

A.D. Thomas got away with it, but soon after went bankrupt. Gibbons gave up the film trade, married the daughter of a music-hall magnate, built the London Palladium theatre, and was later knighted. ☹

CONVERSATION PIECES



You don't need a weatherman: Gabriel Mascaro's *August Winds*

Even in a programme dominated by experimental work, Locarno found room for a host of eccentric, humorous and chatty tales

By Isabel Stevens

Locarno is a lucky festival. With its picture-postcard Swiss lakeside setting, it has the ability to attract both big sponsors and cutting-edge cinema. Its capacity to host big premieres on a giant screen in the city's Piazza Grande, with audiences of up to 8,000, no doubt helps to raise generous prize money (90,000 CHF for the Golden Leopard) and maintain a certain experimental purity (and I can testify to the popularity of the Piazza fare, having spent 20 minutes at the premiere of Luc Besson's *Lucy* hunting in vain for an empty seat). But that's not to say that the cinephile spirit is subdued here. While, reportedly, only a handful of press stayed to the end of one screening of Lav Diaz's Golden Leopard-winning five-hour-plus opus *From What Is Before*, a later public one was sold out. Meanwhile, queues went down the street for some screenings in the retrospective strand – an interesting departure in that this year it focused not on a director but on Italy's Titanus studio. With tributes to Agnès Varda and Víctor Erice, it was tempting to ensconce yourself in old films for the duration.

What I wasn't expecting from a festival famous for rigorous formal and conceptual experimentation and directors with a predilection for long takes was the number of competition entries that were talkative, humorous and energetically edited – and which dealt with grandiose subjects in an eccentric and playful manner. Matías Piñeiro's *The Princess of France* continues with the milieu and subject matter established by his last two films, *Viola* and *Rosalinda*: middle-class twenty-somethings staging Shakespeare in a cultured Buenos Aires bubble. This 70-minute screwball romance wraps itself around *Love's Labour's Lost* protagonist Víctor echoes Ferdinand, King of Navarre, in swearing off women, but gets enveloped in a love heptagon with the actresses of his radio adaptation of *LLL*. The film is not the stuffy study of male lust that this might suggest, its delightfully twisting plot and imaginative close-up camerawork zipping between perspectives and love trysts, paying equal attention to this scheming, incestuous clique's women and their desires. The ending doesn't quite deliver the melancholy punch it should, or equal the bombast and invention of the choreographed football match in the film's opening scene, but the snappy, in-love-with-language dialogue had me charmed.

Eugène Green's *La Sapienza* was another nimble, high-cultured tale, combining drama with a Grand

Tour-style travelogue around the churches, chapels and cloisters of the Baroque Italian architect Francesco Borromini. With his unrelenting stare, Fabrizio Rongione dominates the film as Alexandre Schmidt, a cold and abrupt Borromini-obsessed starchitect. On tour in Italy, he and his wife Aliénor meet Goffredo, a young architecture student, and his sister Lavinia. Alexander reluctantly adopts Goffredo, and the film splits in two: while the two men go off on tour, Aliénor stays to nurse the fragile Lavinia back to health while contemplating her strained relationship with her husband. Schmidt's lectures on Borromini, and Goffredo's precocious ruminations on space and light are the film's highlights, accompanied by some audacious camera work, gliding over the contours of Borromini's creations, which are bathed in a piercing light. At times it resembles Jem Cohen's *Museum Hours*, another philosophical essay emerging out of a story about two strangers meeting and talking; but Green's is a more mannered fable, full of intricate *mises en scène*, the rigorous symmetry with which he positions his characters echoing Borromini's staunchly geometrical compositions. Like *The Princess of France*, *La Sapienza*'s spiralling story collapses into its subject matter in intriguing and surprising ways. In its search for meaning in life and art the film produces some sublime moments, but never takes itself too seriously.

Argentinian director Martín Rejtman provided yet another absurd and very chatty feature – *Two Gunshots* (*Dos disparos*). The title refers to an unexplained and seemingly unmotivated act of self-harm from which teenager Mariano escapes magically unscathed, apart from a bullet lodged in his lung. Rejtman's quizzical comedy charts the aftermath, resolutely avoiding hysteria and drama as it delves into Mariano's pedestrian concerns (notably the stray bullet's disastrous – and comical – aural effects on his flute-playing), gradually turning its attentions to his friends, family and even their friends, before retracing its steps to the family dog.

These films were all by established filmmakers with reputations already made. So where were the discoveries, in a festival heralded for making them? The Cineasti del Presente (Filmmakers of the Present) strand, dedicated to first and second features, yielded little of interest apart from Joel Potrykus's *Buzzard* (see Wide Angle, *S&S*, September), and certainly nothing like last year's Golden Leopard winner *Manakamana*. Instead, the most talked-up feature debut was, deservedly, another competition entry, Gabriel Mascaro's *August Winds* – a dreamy, mysterious contemplation of death and the passing of time set in an isolated village on Brazil's coast. Mascaro seamlessly blends nonfiction observation of rural life and the natural world with quiet drama – the longing for escape of a city woman looking after her grandmother, her boyfriend's obsession with a sea-swallowed corpse, a visiting meteorologist's sudden disappearance... The result was an oneiric but not too enigmatic tale, with remarkable sound design and imagery.

Another discovery – and the only British film in the festival – also warrants a mention: *Abandoned Goods*, directed by Edward Lawrenson (a past deputy editor of *S&S*) and Pia Borg won the Pardino d'oro for best international short. The film is a study of the Surrey psychiatric hospital Netherne and the paintings, drawings and sculptures produced by patients there from the 1960s onwards. Outsider art has been celebrated in many exhibitions in recent years, but the film doesn't just excavate a fascinating and little-known archive (of which only a fraction survives). The fantastical and at times harrowing creations crafted so desperately with limited means (including drawings made on toilet roll with charred matchsticks) are explored in detail; but Borg and Lawrenson offer a unique insight into the artists' thoughts and the doctors' interpretations of their work, as well as the conditions the patients endured in the hospital.



Paradise lost: *From What Is Before*



Absurd and chatty: *Two Gunshots*

If there was a further gripe to be had with the festival's selection, it was that some very conventional fare made the competition cut: Yuri Bykov's action thriller *The Fool* had some tense moments, but its condemnation of corruption in a provincial Russian city was blasted from a pulpit. The only Swiss competition entry, Fernand Melgar's *L'abri*, a portrait of a Lausanne shelter for homeless migrants, didn't opt for experimental nonfiction tactics, with its straightforwardly edited observational scenes. Melgar spends as much time exploring the bureaucracy behind the over-subscribed shelter and the workers who have to make difficult decisions about who to let in as he does focusing on the people in the queue each sub-zero night. The odd sentiment-courting moment aside, it was a complex, sobering film, making clear how far Locarno's wealthy pleasure-ground is divorced from the rest of the world.

The documentary that promised most was *The Iron Ministry* by J.P. Sniadecki, an alumnus of Harvard's Sensory Ethnography Lab (which produced *Manakamana*, as well as the fishing documentary *Leviathan*). Sniadecki's survey of China through the prism of a busy train didn't

'Welcome to our nightmare' was the only introduction Lav Diaz made on stage at the screening of 'From What Is Before'



Shakespeare in love: *The Princess of France*

disappoint. Though not as groundbreaking as *Leviathan*, the films had much in common. Both are intricate surveys of a journey (indeed along with *Manakamana*, they make an informal transport trilogy); and both have an ability to subsume the audience – in Sniadecki's case, through a camera that inches over the train's corridors, its passengers, their possessions and rubbish. What was most remarkable was how footage stitched together from Sniadecki's travels over a year felt like one long train ride, from a nameless, teeming city to an isolated urban hinterland – a place that interviewees on the train said they had long left behind because of a lack of opportunities there.

"Welcome to our nightmare" was the only introduction Lav Diaz made on stage at the screening of *From What Is Before*, his epic chronicling the decline of a remote Filipino village during the years before Ferdinand Marcos's 1972 declaration of martial law. The film concentrates on small, mysterious tremors that unsettle the community: burning houses, butchered cattle and the unexplained death of a local man; it is reminiscent of Haneke's pre-WW1-set *The White Ribbon* – also told in an austere monochrome. No doubt I wasn't the only one sat on a plastic chair in the sports hall-turned-theatre where the screening took place questioning whether a narrative covering three years had to translate into a running time of five hours 40 minutes. But Diaz's tragedy needs time: at first to establish the pace of agrarian life and the traditions and its inhabitants' religious and spiritual beliefs; then to wander among the film's many characters – from the local priest to young tearaway Hakub – before settling on protagonist and sage Sito. Delving into the villagers' lives, Diaz shows secrets emerging and being buried again, in a film concerned as much with the gap between history and truth as with bringing to light specific and brutal moments in his country's past. Diaz doesn't introduce the military and show its poison gradually spreading until the final third of the film, a decision which makes the ending all the more hellish. 8

i *From What Is Before*, *August Winds*, *Two Gunshots* and *La Sapienza* will screen at the BFI London Film Festival (8-19 October)



★★★★★
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 KATHERINE McLAUGHLIN, THE ARTS DESK



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Tate Taylor's portrait of James Brown is irreverent, loose and often fun but also deeply strange, chronically undisciplined and never quite serious enough about its subject



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A class act: Frederick Wiseman's documentary is arranged with deceptive casualness that can seem like slackness, but which leaves nothing to chance

At Berkeley

USA 2013

Director: Frederick Wiseman

Certificate PG 244m 20s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

"Faculty meetings, generally speaking, are just awful. I've spent half my life in the United States government in meetings, and the other half in faculty meetings. And I can tell you, faculty meetings go on twice as long. Why? People in faculties like to speak, they like to talk, they are used to hearing themselves speak. And they are used to watching other people nod in response."

This is Robert Reich, a former US secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton. He is seen in his natural professional environment, as are all the subjects in Frederick Wiseman's *At Berkeley* – which in his case means addressing students at the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley. Like the many faculty members, administrators, staff and students in Wiseman's film, Reich is not identified by onscreen text (there is none) or voiceover (ditto). He has no opportunity to address the camera directly, and there is no obvious emphasis by way of score or camerawork to indicate that, in speaking the above lines, Reich has just articulated something very essential to the film. I have just named a few things that *aren't* in *At Berkeley*. If I were to discuss everything that is in it, I would need all

the space between the covers of this magazine.

Reich's statement comes around the two-and-a-half-hour mark in a 244-minute movie, in one of the scores of fluorescent-lit meetings of which *At Berkeley* is composed: classroom lectures, administrative convocations, live performances and the powwows of campus discussion groups for African-American and military veteran students. (Reserve Officers' Training Corps drills, meanwhile, take place in the half-light of dawn on the university grounds.) These meetings, held in spaces both intimate and vast, are broken up by interstitial views of the campus. The spruce *beaux arts* neoclassical buildings and the light of northern California in autumn filtering through the well-watered flora make for a picturesque scene, though such asides emphasise the process of constant upkeep by which this idyllic facade is maintained, as in the image of a caretaker sweeping a spiral stairwell, sending clumps of dust on a long fall to the floor below. All of this is business as usual, even the film's one incontrovertible event, which doesn't come along until the final quarter and which calls into question Berkeley's impeccable self-presentation. This is a protest sit-in in the reading room of the campus library held on 7 October 2010, of which more later.

Wiseman has first-hand professional experience of the campus environment, though in a very different era. While teaching a course in legal medicine at Boston University School of Law in the early 60s, he took his class on a

field trip to the Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Bridgewater, the first of many such visits. Bridgewater would become the subject of 1967's *Titicut Follies*, a documentary about procedural politics within an institution. It has been followed, to date, by another 37 institutional studies. Eighty-four years old as of last January, Wiseman has enjoyed a raised profile lately thanks to his last three films, *La Danse* (2009), *Boxing Gym* (2010) and *Crazy Horse* (2011) – about the Paris Opera Ballet, Lord's Gym in Austin, Texas, and a Champs-Élysées cabaret, respectively. (If he failed to crack the top ten in *Sight & Sound*'s recent documentary poll, it is only because his sustained excellence makes the selection of a single consensus masterpiece impossible.) These recent Wiseman subjects are more than usually attractive to potential audiences, as they offer the promise of trained bodies in motion, but *At Berkeley*, dedicated wholly to palaver, is closer



University of California, Berkeley

in spirit to the bureaucratic opuses on which Wiseman's reputation rests, the last of these being 2006's very great *State Legislature* (that one just shy of the four-hour mark), shot during a meeting of the Idaho legislature in Boise.

Wiseman has worked in the US principally and, more recently, in France. Both are nations with longstanding democratic traditions, and Wiseman's unifying subject may be said to be the democratic process in all its genius, corruptibility, inefficiency and untidiness. On the surface, his films seem to internalise that untidiness a little too much. Comprising footage shot over 12 weeks in the autumn of 2010, *At Berkeley* first appeared complete at the 2013 Venice Film Festival. That the arrangement of its material is the result of three years' on-and-off effort is not immediately evident, for the film is arranged with a deceptive casualness that can seem like slackness. But just as the car radio 'coincidentally' happening across Otis Redding's 'Sitting on the Dock of the Bay' at the beginning of Wiseman's 1968 *High School* comments incisively on what we are about to see (the key phrase is "wasting time"), so *At Berkeley* too has a theme song, The Supremes' 'Up the Ladder to the Roof', performed by an all-girl a cappella group to a stupefied audience. Or so it seems – who knows if the reaction shots actually correspond to the performance, for Wiseman's foxy, faux-offhand style leaves nothing to chance.

In the context of the film, the metaphor of 'up the ladder' ascent refers not to heaven above but to upward mobility, to which higher education has traditionally been the key. *At Berkeley* pinpoints a moment where access to that education – particularly for middle-class students, coming from families who are neither poor enough to make them eligible for aid nor rich enough to pay the latest inflated asking price – is at risk, as the state of California scales back its contribution to the school, demanding such measures as tuition hikes, operational streamlining and staff cuts.

In its chain of classroom observation vignettes, *At Berkeley* provides a department-by-department tour of the campus, and the expertise that admission offers access to. Watching these scenes, there is sport in trying to determine if and how the particular lesson at hand is meant to act as a coded commentary on the life of the university – the film's 'core mission', to use the corporate jargon with which the administrative meetings are laced. In some cases, the connection is easy: when an instructor at the zoology and botany building lectures on the cost/benefit analysis behind the dispersal of a species, his words might just as well be applied to any students whose aspirations take them out of their native terrain and into the strange territory of an ultra-competitive university. Elsewhere, the material defies such straightforward readings. To what end, for example, does Wiseman linger on the robot being programmed to fold a napkin, or the young man learning to walk again with an experimental pair of bionic legs?

Confirmation of the miracles that are possible within the halls of academia, these are also evidence of the "growth of the research enterprise" at Berkeley, made possible by new funding sources, both government and corporate, against which the university must guard its public character. This is one of the recurring subjects for discussion in the dozens of administrative meetings that



Meeting of minds: the university's then chancellor Robert J. Birgeneau addresses his staff

Frederick Wiseman's unifying subject may be said to be the democratic process in all its genius, corruptibility, inefficiency and untidiness

are shuffled in among the classroom scenes, in which topics include tenure triage and "corporatising the structure" of administration by replacing relationship-based, personalised inefficiency with "predictable, repeatable, improvable processes"; the longest single sequence concerns the rehearsal of campus police response scenarios in preparation for the announced, forthcoming student protest.

The film's most recognisable character, who unfailingly reappears from one meeting to the next, is Robert J. Birgeneau, then the university's chancellor, a silver-haired gentleman faintly reminiscent of a latter-day Roger Corman, with an unfailing smile and unmistakably Canadian politesse, as perfectly manicured as the institution over which he presides. Birgeneau has seemingly secured the position through his uncommon fluency in the bureaucratic lexicon that has infested every corner of the university in the period of what he calls "progressive disinvestment" – the phrase used to refer to the slow withdrawal of state money from this state institution. This ongoing crisis is the basis for much discussion of "sustainable funding models", "misaligned incentives", "intermediate strategies", "duplication of

efforts", "overall vision", "dynamics of logistics" and "the trajectory of this movement".

Those last three lines are spoken by students during that 7 October library sit-in, which – once the initial racket settles down – takes on the character of still another sonorous assembly. You get the feeling that you are seeing the next generation of administrators rehearsing for their future day jobs through activism, an impression only strengthened when, after the peaceable dispersal of the sit-in, Birgeneau belittles the protesters for their lack of organisation by comparing their efforts, unfavourably, with the clear overall core-mission-oriented vision of his own protest days.

Wiseman would have had quite another film on his hands if he'd arrived at Berkeley just a year later. Autumn 2011 brought the Occupy Wall Street-affiliated 'Occupy Cal' protests, during which UC Berkeley police dispersed protesters on Sproul Plaza with truncheons swinging. (The resulting outcry led to Birgeneau stepping down as chancellor the following spring.) All of this would've been unavoidable headline news during *At Berkeley's* post-production, but rather than ending his film with an ode to youthful disobedience and the renaissance spirit of the eternal left, Wiseman opts to take a philosophical tone. A lecturer discusses the prospects of the future colonisation of other planetary systems, unlikely despite "exponentiating" technological advances – although, he concedes, "maybe the machines that eventually replace us" will succeed. These are machines that might very well be made at UC Berkeley – by then, maybe the only sentient beings who can afford the tuition. ☺

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Frederick Wiseman
Photography
John Davey
Editor
Frederick Wiseman
Sound
Frederick Wiseman

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Production Companies
A film by Frederick Wiseman
A co-production of Berkeley Film, Inc.

and Independent Television Service (ITVS)
A Zipporah Films, Inc. release
Funding provided by Ford Foundation, Independent Television Service (ITVS), Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Public Broadcasting Service, National Endowment for the Arts, Sundance Institute

Documentary Film Program and Fund, Rosenthal Family Foundation, Pershing Square Foundation
Executive Producer
Sally Jo Fifer

In Colour
[178:1]

Distributor
Independent Cinema Office

The University of California, Berkeley, autumn 2010. Vignettes of lecture and classroom discussions in various university departments are intercut with administrative meetings in which the then chancellor Robert J. Birgeneau and his staff discuss how to meet the budgetary challenges posed by the ongoing decline of state investment in the university. The staff are seen preparing to deal with a student protest addressing these austerity measures, while in both lecture hall and elsewhere on campus, Berkeley's historical dedication to free speech is given much lip service. The protesters stage a sit-in in the library but their demands are met with bemusement; after they disperse, Birgeneau dismisses their efforts.

Pride

United Kingdom/France 2014

Director: Matthew Warchus

Certificate 15 120m 0s

See Industry
page 14

Reviewed by Ben Walters

I recently argued in the *Guardian* that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender cinema is currently undergoing something of a 'backward turn': an increasingly sizeable body of work has emerged over recent years comprising films that could be considered retrospective in one of several, sometimes overlapping ways. These include documentaries about aspects of queer heritage; shorts and feature films about older characters; and features with period settings, usually based on true stories. (The redistribution in festivals, through general release and on home-viewing platforms of LGBT-interest titles from the archives could also be considered part of this trend.) Rather than evidence of an appetite for nostalgia or comfort viewing, however, this tendency seems to represent a moment of taking stock. In recent years, in the industrialised world, the struggle for LGBT rights has become closely bound to the pursuit of equal access to institutions such as marriage and military service. Now that those goals seem to have been substantively achieved, there's space to breathe and become reacquainted – or, for younger audiences, acquainted for the first time – with facets of past queer experience that might be useful in preparing for whatever is to come.

As an account of the real-life 1984-85 alliance between the London fundraising group Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) and the people of Onllwyn, a mining village in Wales's Dulais Valley, *Pride* falls squarely into the period-picture category. But like most such backward-looking films, it evidently has the future in mind: in its engaging, funny, affecting, even inspiring way, *Pride* is essentially a rousing paean to joined-up activism in an era of radical conservatism. It benefits from a story you couldn't make up: a town-and-country culture-clash tale taking place over exactly a year, set against Britain's last gasp of popular socialism on the one hand and the rise of Aids panic on the other. But, some invented characters and situations aside, it did happen. Even more surprising, the clashes in this case were pretty mild: after initial wariness, LGSM did get a welcome in the valleys, if not unalloyed appreciation.

Still, even in 2014 its subject matter might put some mainstream audiences off, and the makers of *Pride* opt to counterbalance such reservations with an eminently accessible formal approach. Director Matthew Warchus offers little in the way of striking cinematic innovation: the technical style is straightforward, rooted in simple, well-lit set-ups punctuated by spectacular landscape shots or moments of handheld suspense, with a practically incessant soundtrack incorporating pop, traditional music and orchestral score, nudging emotions this way or that as well as helping to cement an efficiently conjured sense of period.

Pride also boasts a cast packed with reassuring screen presences, including Bill Nighy, Imelda Staunton and Paddy Considine, all on fine form on the Onllwyn side, as well as less familiar but thoroughly sympathetic faces on the London



Café culture: *Pride*

side. The one misfire in the name of populism (I presume) is Dominic West's casting as an *outré* and unabashed veteran queer campaigner in the vein of Quentin Crisp or Bette Bourne; floaty scarves, alas, do not a fierce *femme* make, and *The Wire*'s McNulty keeps glinting through. In terms of period-appropriate queer filmmaking, then, the overall approach is closer to the sly but big-hearted who'd-have-thought-it social observations of Stephen Frears's *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) than the exquisite lyrical alienation of Derek Jarman's *The Angelic Conversation* (1987).

In its embrace of formal conservatism, the film echoes *Milk*, Gus Van Sant's 2008 tribute to San Francisco's pioneering gay municipal politician Harvey Milk. It was true to the approach of his subject that Van Sant adopted

In its engaging, funny, affecting, even inspiring way, 'Pride' is essentially a rousing paean to joined-up activism in an era of radical conservatism

an easily digestible formal strategy in the name of a progressive expansion of empathy, and something similar but different is at work here. In the case of *Milk* (which drew heavily on Rob Epstein's documentary *The Times of Harvey Milk*, released in 1984 during *Pride*'s period setting), the form was biopic and the apt tone one of inspirational martyrdom. In this culture-clash affair, it's an unmistakably British appeal to down-to-earth humour, eccentricity and a sense of fair play. (This is surely the first film in which an old dear chirps: "Dai, your gays are here!") The focus ranges across a dozen characters rather than a single salutary figure – from the nervy adolescent closet case living with his parents to the feisty young campaigner, the warmly no-nonsense village organiser and the bigoted busybody. (Village life is more or less matriarchal.)

This compounds the sense that *Pride* belongs in a lineage, reaching back to Ealing, of plucky British comedies in which sleeves are rolled up, offbeat friendships forged and true colours revealed while potentially contentious social subjects hover around the edge of the frame; titles such as *Personal Services* (1987), *Beautiful Thing* (1996), *Brassed Off* (1996), *The Full Monty* (1997) and *East Is East* (1999) come to mind, as well as some Ken Loach. Yet the deft handling of its extended company perhaps also speaks to the project's theatrical pedigree – the screenplay is by Stephen Beresford, writer of the National Theatre's *The Last of the Haussmans*, and Warchus is Kevin Spacey's successor as creative director of the London Old Vic (as well as director of the largely forgotten 1999 feature adaptation of Sam Shepard's *Sympatico*). In general, a balance is well maintained between a rousing sense of mission and individual lessons learnt and challenges overcome.

The shape of the story is not so much a triumphal arc with a tragic falling-off as a cycle



Miner key: Jessica Gunning as Sian and Imelda Staunton as Hefina



United we stand: the personal is invariably political in *Pride*, which focuses on public actions rather than private feelings

of advances and retreats that's seen to extend back to earlier decades and forward to the present and beyond. This does result in a somewhat episodic feel by classical standards, especially in the final act, but makes a pleasant change from narratives of implausibly blunt and final personal transformation. The plot isn't driven by budding romances or seething personal vendettas; this is very much a story about public actions rather than private feelings. Or rather, the personal is invariably political: not only is one leading character's first kiss not the beginning of a romance, it's timed to coincide with the rousing finale of a speech about solidarity.

Solidarity, in fact, is what the picture is about. If there's little explosive violence here, there's still shock and indignation in the quotidian belittlement of both constituencies – miners and gay people – by those in power. Small moments of thoughtless homophobia and union-bashing stick in the craw, successfully engendering empathy across apparently wide distances. In essence, *Pride* is a feelgood treatise on intersectionality, the utterly timely idea that systems of oppression and discrimination inevitably overlap and are most fruitfully considered and confronted in relation to one another. Or, to put it another way, disco and brass bands might go together better than you'd expect. 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
David Livingstone
Screenplay
Stephen Beresford
Director of Photography
Tat Radcliffe
Editor
Melanie Ann Oliver
Production Designer
Simon Bowles
Music
Christopher Nightingale
Sound Recordist

Martin Trevis
Costume Designer
Charlotte Walter

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Executive Producers
Cameron McCracken Christine Langan James Clayton

CAST

Bill Nighy
Cliff
Imelda Staunton
Hefina
Dominic West
Jonathan
Paddy Considine
Dai
Andrew Scott
Gethin
George Mackay
Joe
Joseph Gilgun

Mike
Ben Schnetzer
Mark
Chris Overton
Reggie
Faye Marsay
Steph
Freddie Fox
Jeff
Jessica Gunning
Sian
Joshua Hill
Ray
Lisa Palfrey
Maureen

Liz White
Margaret
Monica Dolan
Marion

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Pathé Productions

London, June 1984. At Gay Pride, closeted 20-year-old Joe meets charismatic Mark and fellow activists Mike, Steph, Jonathan and Gethin (Jonathan's boyfriend), who runs the Gay's the Word bookshop. Mark urges them to set up a fundraising group to support the striking National Union of Mineworkers in its struggle against the Thatcher government. They form Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners and, despite scepticism from both gay people and miners' groups, they contact the Welsh village of Onllwyn. Union rep Dai collects donations and speaks at a gay pub in London; in Onllwyn, LGSM members meet community organiser Hefina, older union activist Cliff and young homemaker Sian. The newcomers' legal advice and dancing lessons win over most locals, though Cliff's sister-in-law Maureen remains hostile. By Christmas, the strike is devastating

Onllwyn. As Mark plans a benefit concert in London, Maureen tells the tabloids about LGSM's activities. Gay's the Word is attacked, but the gig is a success. Joe's parents are horrified to discover his sexuality and Maureen rigs a vote for Onllwyn to ditch LGSM. Gethin is attacked and hospitalised. Cliff tells Hefina that he is gay; she is unsurprised. In March, the miners are defeated. Joe goes to Onllwyn to show support; Mark persuades him to leave home. Sian visits Gethin in hospital, learning that Jonathan has HIV but is healthy.

In June 1985, Gay Pride officially bars political marching, but coachloads of miners arrive to support LGSM and they lead the parade.

Onscreen titles report the Labour party's 1986 adoption of gay rights, Mark's 1987 death from Aids and Sian's 2005 election as an MP.



Top of the lake: the first part of the film, in an Estonian commune, reveals the influence of *vérité* and ethnographic pioneers Jean Rouch and Robert Gardner

A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness

France/Estonia/United Kingdom/
The Netherlands 2013
Directors: Ben Rivers, Ben Russell
Certificate 15 98m 32s

Reviewed by Jordan Cronk

For just over a decade now, Somerset native Ben Rivers has mined an observational, poetic strain of filmmaking, folding in elements of fiction and documentary as he has visited a variety of landscapes throughout the United Kingdom. Ben Russell, raised in New England and a graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago, made his first films in the late 90s, and likewise synthesises styles, infusing ethnographic practice with distinctly surreal, rhythmic visual and aural flourishes. Together they stand at the vanguard of contemporary cross-continental experimental cinema, and while each betrays a preoccupation with vagabond lifestyles, indigenous cultures and remote topographies, their methodologies diverge as often as they overlap. In that sense, their collaborative feature *A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness* feels at once a preordained and precarious proposition.

Mainly practitioners of short-form filmmaking, Rivers and Russell have expanded the scope of their vision in recent years, producing feature-length works – *Two Years at Sea* (2011)

and *Let Each One Go Where He May* (2009), respectively – that serve as refinements of their primary interests. *A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness* is something different. A three-part narrative following a single character across a trio of far-flung locales, it proceeds in a linear yet highly divergent manner, shifting not simply locations but also formal concerns as well as contextual constituents from episode to episode. Such delineations may suggest an allocation of directorial duties between or even within specific passages, and while each movement of the film does bear characteristics of both filmmakers, these blanket observations fail to acknowledge the nuance and symmetry of the combined aesthetic voice – not to mention the total collaborative effort with which Rivers and Russell have approached the project, from conception to production, and editing to dissemination.

The film opens at nightfall, with a long, unbroken shot of a moonlit lake, surveying left to right and back with an ominous calm. The emergence of voices – a slowly massing, ritualistic choir, perhaps singing the incantation alluded to in the film's title – eventually breaks the silence, adding a palpable tension to the tranquil surroundings. As we meet our ostensible hero, a nameless, bearded enigma played by Robert A.A. Lowe (an experimental musician who, under the name of Lichens, records improvisational drone and avant-folk), he's crouched by a campfire in the forest, a

solitary figure in a nocturnal wilderness. As the film shifts focus to a nearby Estonian commune, Lowe will literally fade into the background, as the daily activity of his fellow inhabitants takes precedence over any individual enterprise. We watch as members of the group wander and work, cook and converse, bathe and breastfeed. Rivers and Russell capture their routines and repartee with an immediacy that feels spontaneous despite a probing camera and the presence of Lowe in the midst of the commotion. There's an unmistakable *cinéma vérité* sensibility to this sequence that immediately establishes a diagrammatic rhetoric between the directors and their subjects, a dialogue they'll continue to engage in even as the film soon relocates and actual discourse between characters becomes less prevalent.

The influence of *vérité* and ethnographic pioneers Jean Rouch and Robert Gardner has loomed large over the work of both filmmakers, but especially so in the case of Russell, who has, throughout his career, taken various aboriginal cultures as subject and inspiration. This first full segment of the film betrays this influence, though it's much closer to formulating a recognisable reality than anything in either of the director's previous works, whether performative (Russell) or meditative (Rivers).

The meditative method is employed in the film's middle segment, which follows Lowe into the Finnish hinterlands, where he lives and toils



In a dank club in Oslo, a black-metal band fills the room with symphonic cascades of guitar, industrial blast beats and savagely shrill screams



Rage against the machine: Robert A.A. Lowe

on the land in total isolation. In its secluded setting and with its sole figure of fascination, this sequence is reminiscent (and in some ways an extension) of Rivers's *Two Years at Sea*, which found the filmmaker similarly following a hermetic man who had removed himself from civilisation to embark on a very personal journey of enlightenment. For Rivers and Russell, both equally drawn to subcultures and sequestered societies, existence is a matter of interaction: between man and nature, the individual and his or her environment. Their films seem to imply that life, whether in its most poised or ecstatic state, is simply an elemental accumulation of experience. Towards the end of the film's second section, Lowe paints his face white and burns down a small shack, watching the flames engulf one of the last remnants of humanity that might provide him with unnecessary convenience.

Another cut to darkness ushers in a transition into the film's final and most thrilling movement with only the sound of quickening guitar on the soundtrack to guide our sensory path. We find ourselves in a dank, anonymous club in Oslo, where a black-metal band is revealed as the source of the gathering maelstrom. Lowe is on guitar, his facial acrylic now serving as corpse paint, and a group consisting of members of Krallice, Liturgy and the Flying Luttenbachers proceeds to fill the room with symphonic cascades of guitar, industrial blast beats and savagely shrill screams. Black metal, as a genre, is rooted in anti-religious fundamentals, and *A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness*, from its title to its promotional materials to its various narrative backdrops, employs similarly pagan, ritualistic iconography throughout. But while its characters' situational autonomy suggests a rejection of organised religion, there's a parallel, equally persuasive sense of spirituality coursing through the film, one perhaps stronger than any prescribed religious persuasion.

In a rare moment of serenity, the band turn down the volume for a brief period of instrumental ambience during which the camera turns from the musicians and scans the faces in the crowd (in a floating, horizontal pan echoing the film's opening shot) as feedback and distortion sound in the distance. In this passage, pregnant as it is with anxiety and other unquantifiable emotion, anything seems possible. The facial expressions of the audience members, ranging from numbed to entranced, speak to an alternate source



A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness

of devotion, fulfilment and inspiration, not unlike the collective and itinerant behaviour reflected in the film's previous two episodes. And when the sound erupts yet again, the vocal exhortations of Lowe and his bandmates ever more harrowing, the audience appears to have reached a kind of cumulative nirvana.

It's pertinent to add that the film's entire final sequence feels of a piece with Russell's previous forays into audio/visual exploration, particularly *Black and White Trypps Number Three* (2007), which similarly captured the Rhode Island noise-rock band Lightning Bolt amid the throes of ecstatic performance. But with this segment's comparatively seamless, integrated thematic composure, the bracing possibility of the primordial and the spiritual coexisting on their own terms – which this music, and by extension this film, seems to propose – feels not only inevitable but completely natural. Thus when Lowe departs the stage, removes his makeup and exits the club, the literal sounds of silence still ringing overhead, what had perhaps felt foretold in this meeting of the minds between two talented young filmmakers instead reflects in his disposition something rare and unforeseen for the contemporary avant garde: a harnessing of the extreme ends of human expression within a singular, harmonious spectrum of creativity. 🎧

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Julie Gayet
Nadia Turincev

Camera

Ben Rivers
Ben Russell

Edit

Ben Rivers
Ben Russell

Sound Designer

Nicolas Becker

@Rouge

International,
Black Hands

Production

Companies

Produced by Rouge
International

Co-produced by

Black Hands

In association
with ARTE France,

La Lucarne

With support from
Région Ile-de-France,

PUMA, Creative

Catalyst Award in
partnership with

Channel 4 BRITDOC
Foundation,

CineMart,

CPH:FORUM,
Cultural Endowment
of Estonia, FIDLab

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Soda Pictures

Europe, the present day. On a moonlit evening, an anonymous figure warms himself by a campfire in woods near a lake. He will soon journey to three far-flung locales. Relocating first to an Estonian commune bustling with nameless inhabitants attending to daily activities, the man is seen wandering on the margins of the community, working, relaxing and playing guitar. Soon afterwards he finds himself in the forests of the Finnish countryside, living and working off the land; he wanders, reads and experiences nature, then burns down a small shack, the only remnant of surrounding civilisation. Proceeding to a club in Norway, the man, now made up with corpse paint, is on stage with a black-metal band. The audience watches enthralled, as the band exorcise their demons in a lengthy, harrowing performance. The man leaves the stage and exits the building, back into the night.

All Cheerleaders Die

USA 2013

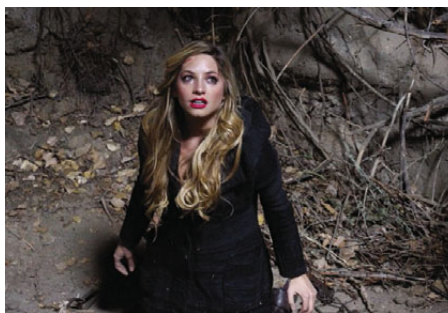
Directors: Lucky McKee, Chris Sivertson

Reviewed by Violet Lucca

It's sometimes hard to understand why campy, softcore pornographic films still exist, when one can stream or download any body part and/or scenario almost instantaneously. Presumably its continuing presence is, like many of the worst aspects of contemporary Western culture, in large part attributable to nostalgia – which is much in evidence in the particular set of clichés Lucky McKee and Chris Sivertson deal in in *All Cheerleaders Die*: bi-curious, cocktease cheerleaders who turn into cocktease vampire-like creatures and leave behind dried-up corpses reminiscent of those in *Lifeorce* (1985).

But for all the almost-bare breasts, near up-skirt shots and bug-eyed leering – and the charm of seeing vapid high-school kids being played by Z-list actors who are only a pubic hair away from adult film proper – *All Cheerleaders Die* never seems to hit quite the right tone. There's something to be said about the suggestion of a gesture (a shy smile, some hair being tucked behind an ear) that more workmanlike erotica doesn't offer, but *All Cheerleaders Die* has too many action sequences – badly directed and weighted down by cheapo CGI – to create any sustained titillation or charm. (To wit: there are two lengthy car chases but only one shot of bare breasts, which looks as if it has been cut out of another movie and inserted into this one.) Conversely, the low-stakes, suspense-free dialogue and make-out sessions undercut the film's horror potential – the cheerleaders don't die and come back as bloodthirsty succubae until about halfway through, and even then they've still got to class.

Whereas much of contemporary horror suffers from the need to be self-reflexive (either unimaginatively playing with convention or featuring a horror star in a winking performance), *All Cheerleaders Die* is hindered by taking its set-up at face value, which leaves little room for anything truly surprising to happen. Save for benevolent Wiccan Leena (Sianoa Smit-McPhee), who reanimates the cheerleaders after they are involved in a fatal car wreck, everyone is motivated by revenge,



Gimme an aargh: Brooke Butler

spouting unwitty, interchangeable dialogue. Even motions towards playfulness don't go anywhere – as when prissy, super-Christian cheerleader Martha (Reanin Johannink) switches bodies with Hanna (Amanda Grace Cooper), her mousy, flat-chested younger sister. Though the swap drives the action forward somewhat (Hanna seizes the opportunity to have sex with a football player Martha likes; Martha later exsanguinates him), it's mostly used as an excuse for the sisters to snipe at each other even more. Depending on your understanding of sibling dynamics, these turns will either seem inevitable or misogynistic, but definitely not subversive.

The other danger of McKee and Sivertson's intentionally simple approach is that seemingly benign invocations of stereotype can become incredibly problematic because they go unchecked. Here it's the antagonist Terry (Tom Williamson), the muscular black captain of the football team. The only black person with a speaking role, Terry is the top erotic prize for the entire student body and the root of the conflict between the white cheerleaders. When not lustful or being lusted after, he's a violent, angry and unpredictable figure who punches his girlfriend, leaves the cheerleaders to die in their car and slices the undead girls up with knives and bear traps. (In a tasteless, pointless 'twist' near the end, it's revealed that he raped the protagonist – as if everything else he'd done up to that point wasn't awful enough.) ☹

Alleluia

Director: Fabrice du Welz

Certificate 18 93m 16s

Reviewed by Anton Bittel

"Did you see it? The pain in Bogart's eyes... Exactly, you see nothing. Yet he was consumed by the crab. Cancer of the oesophagus. He never complained. Never a word about the mosquitoes, the heat, nothing. Absolute respect for Humphrey."

The speaker is Michel (Laurent Lucas), catching a matinee of *The African Queen* with his lover Gloria (Lola Dueñas) and praising his "favourite actor" for the heroic stoicism that enables him to conceal real suffering in the furtherance of onscreen romantic adventure. Michel too is engaged in a whirlwind romance with the possessive and utterly besotted Gloria, and does not himself complain whenever she ruins his swindling schemes by jealousy (and serially) murdering his equally enchanted female marks. And so this odd couple, pretending at times to be sibling missionaries from Africa (just like the characters in *The African Queen*), enact their *amour fou* while keeping reality (be it Gloria's discarded and forgotten daughter or the enormity of the duo's crimes) at bay, ever in search of "a love story... with a happy ending". In their way, Michel and Gloria are living out a cinematic ideal – and it is in a cinema that we will last see them, with Gloria determinedly keeping her eyes fixed on the screen's shimmering dream images rather than turn and face the police who have just entered the rear of the theatre.

Inspired (like Leonard Kastle's *The Honeymoon Killers*, Arturo Ripstein's *Deep Crimson* and Todd Robinson's *Lonely Hearts*) by the real-life story of 40s murderers Martha Beck and Raymond Fernandez but transplanted to the Ardennes in present-day Belgium (where director/co-writer Fabrice du Welz's uncategorisable 2004 feature debut *Calvaire* also took place), *Alleluia* is horrific true crime reconfigured as grand erotic delusion. Once the charming con artist, black magician and creep Michel has swept lonely single mother Gloria off her feet with tales of his (invented) calling as a shoe salesman ("I help people do something essential, find the shoe made for their foot"), it is in fact he who becomes pinned under the foot of her devoted

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Andrew van den Houten
Robert Tonino
Written by
Lucky McKee
Chris Sivertson

Based on their original film *All Cheerleaders Die* [1999]

Director of Photography
Greg Ephraim
Edited by

Ben La Marca

Zach Passero

Production Design

Krista Gall

Music

Mads Heldtberg

Sound Mixer

Ed White

Costume Design

Oneita Parker

©Modern

Cheerleaders LLC

Production

Company

A Modernciné

production

A McKee/

Sivertson film

Executive Producer

Arrien Schiltkamp

CAST

Caitlin Stasey

Maddy Killian

Sianoa Smit-McPhee

Leena Miller

Brooke Butler

Tracy Bingham

Tom Williamson

Terry Stankus

Amanda Grace

Cooper

Hanna Popkin

Reanin Johannink

Martha Popkin

Nicholas S. Morrison

Ben Fector

Chris Petrovski

George Shank

Leigh Parker

Manchester 'Manny'

Mankiewitz

Jordan Wilson

Vik De Palma

Felisha Cooper

Alexis Grace Andersen

Michael Bowen

Larry

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Altitude Film

Distribution

End credits alternative

onscreen title

All Cheerleaders

Die Part One

US, present day. Maddy reviews documentary footage that she shot of cheerleader Alexis the year before. In the middle of demonstrating a cheer, Alexis falls and fatally crushes her skull. Maddy vows revenge on fellow cheerleader Tracy and Alexis's boyfriend Terry because they didn't wait long after Alexis's death to start dating. Maddy secures a spot on the cheerleading team, which allows her to manipulate and make out with Tracy. When the cheerleaders drunkenly crash their car

into a river, the boys leave them behind to drown. Leena, Maddy's ex-girlfriend and a practising Wiccan, resurrects the cheerleaders with magical stones but they now require blood to survive. The cheerleaders slowly pick off members of the football team over the course of a school day; Terry realises what's going on and steals their powers. Maddy, Leena, Terry and Tracy fight in a graveyard. Tracy and Terry are overcome. One of the stones falls into Alexis's grave, resurrecting her angry, rotting corpse.



Con pair: Laurent Lucas, Lola Dueñas

Attila Marcel

France 2013
Director: Sylvain Chomet
Certificate 12A 106m 10s

infatuation as she simultaneously insists on joining him in his seductive scams while refusing to countenance him having sex with anyone else. In Michel, Gloria has found her perfect fit – and in keeping with the footwear theme, *Alleluia* makes a veritable leitmotiv of feet, shoes and toes. Whether used in sexual play, as weapons or sawn off in the disposal of a corpse, these become fetishistic signifiers of another kind of extremity.

“There are people with bad intentions out there, incapable of understanding us,” Gloria warns Michel. “They no longer have dreams, they’re empty and alone, they live in darkness.” Her words drift across the fourth wall to put us in our place, right there in the theatre’s shadows – and if there is any doubt as to which side of the gulf between fantasy and reality Gloria herself occupies in this metacinematic exchange, she repeats her words in song, accompanied by an orchestral arrangement, before cutting up the body of a woman she has just murdered in the name of intense romantic passion. For all its basis in reality, her madness matches the movie’s as the slipper fits Cinderella’s foot – while of course the actual ‘Lonely Hearts Killers’ were arrested two years before *The African Queen* was ever released. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Vincent Tavier
Clément Miserez
Matthieu Warter

Screenplay/

Adaptation
Fabrice du Welz
Vincent Tavier

Dialogue

Roman Protat
Cinematography
Manu Dacosse

Editor

Anne-Laure Guégan

Art Director

Emmanuel de
Meulemeester

Original Music

Vincent Cahay

Sound Recordist

Ludo Van
Pachterbeke

Costumes

Florence Scholtes
Christophe Pidre

Production

Companies
Panique, Radar
Films, Savage Film,
One Eyed, Versus

present a film by
Fabrice du Welz

Produced with
the support of the

Centre du Cinéma et
de l’Audiovisuel de la

Fédération Wallonie-
Bruxelles and VOO

With the
participation of

Wallonia, BeTV,
Canal+, Ciné+

With the support
of the Fonds

Audiovisuel de
Flandre (VAF),

Tax Shelter du
Gouvernement

Fédéral de Belgique

In association
with Inver Invest,

Cofinova 8

CAST

Laurent Lucas

Michel

Lola Dueñas

Gloria

Helena Noguerra

Solange

Stéphane Bissot

Madeleine

Edith Le Merdy

Marguerite

Anne-Marie Loop

Gabriella

Pili Groyne

Eve

David Murgia

Father Luis

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Studiocanal Limited

The Ardennes, Belgium, present day. Encouraged by her friend Madeleine, single mother and morgue worker Gloria goes on a date with Michel. She falls deeply in love. After realising that he swindles money from vulnerable women like herself, Gloria joins him in his cross-country scams, leaving her young daughter with Madeleine. Posing as siblings, the lovers move in with Michel’s new bride-cum-mark Marguerite, whom Gloria murders in a jealous rage. Michel promises Gloria that he will now sleep only with her. When Gloria catches him engaged in sexual acts with their next mark, the ageing Christian benefactress Gabriella, she again murders their hostess in anger. Gloria and Michel perform a private marriage ritual, and take work together in the country manor of young widow Solange, planning to kill her once she has married Michel so that they can inherit the property. Michel starts secretly drugging Gloria to conceal his growing attachment to Solange and her daughter Eve. When Solange reveals her pregnancy to Michel’s ‘sister’, Gloria makes Michel kill Solange. Eve escapes, and Michel and Gloria are arrested in a cinema.

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

Sylvain Chomet’s first live-action feature opens on a snake-hipped figure strutting down a cobbled Parisian street to a disco score, his leather jacket studded with the words ‘Attila Marcel’, his visceral sexuality attenuated somewhat by the tiny hands waving in and out of shot and the cooing of the infant whose pram-bound point of view we’re sharing. It’s an appropriately barmy beginning to a bizarre film, a trippy admixture of Marcel Proust and *Mr Benn*, seemingly inspired by a line from Proust’s *The Prisoner*, which claims that memory can offer us both sedatives and poisons.

Attila Marcel centres on 33-year-old Paul (Guillaume Gouix) and his quest to uncover the mystery of what happened to his parents – sweet, luminous Anita and the more sinister Attila. Their deaths have traumatised Paul into silence, and he lives a cloistered, cosseted existence with a matched pair of elderly aunts (Hélène Vincent and the late Bernadette Lafont, having an uproarious time) in their *fin-de-siècle* apartment. Paul’s leash is as tight as a pedigree pet’s, but when he stumbles through the door of his less than subtly named neighbour Mme Proust (Anne Le Ny) he discovers a key to his past in the form of a hallucinogenic infusion that reveals repressed memories.

What follows in the way of plot is largely nonsensical, serving as little more than a launchpad for Chomet’s fantastic flights into Paul’s memories. Shot from the infant Paul’s point of view, carved from a makeshift, craft aesthetic and saturated with colour, these scenes offer seaside serenades, jamming jazz frogs and a gorgeous, sizzingly sexy tango-cum-wrestling match. Even the sober world around Paul is surreal, filled with such characters as a taxidermist doctor, a horny Chinese cellist and a blind piano tuner who adjusts a staircase railing so that all the bars make the same clang against his cane.

If all this seems rather cartoonish, that’s hardly



The pianist: Vincent, Gouix, Lafont

surprising. *Attila Marcel* stands in a line of descent that runs from Buster Keaton through Tati and Demy to Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Michel Gondry and most obviously – with its childishly innocent hero, kitsch costumes and retro soundtrack – Wes Anderson. But Chomet’s primary reference is to his own work: the film’s universe is populated with the pin-neat, steely-willed old ladies, mismatched twins and outsized animals that ambled through *Belleville Rendez-vous* (2003) and *The Old Lady and the Pigeons* (1997), while the tender mother-son relationship plays out as both a reversal and a repetition of the father-daughter dynamic central to his adaptation of Tati’s *The Illusionist* (2010). The overriding impression is of an animation film that’s been colourwashed with live action.

Central performances from Gouix and Le Ny put flesh on the characters’ bones – the former is particularly impressive in dual roles as the sad-eyed, silent Paul and his virile menace of a father. It’s at its most freewheeling that Chomet’s film takes flight, though. Where Anderson’s work, like Tati’s, is tightly controlled, *Attila Marcel* seems to overspill the borders of its frame. Featherlight and sticky-sweet, it’s the cinematic equivalent of a profiterole. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

A film by

[i.e. Written and
Directed by]

Sylvain Chomet

Produced by

Claudie Ossard

Chris Bolzli

Director of

Photography

Antoine Roch

Editor

Simon Jacquet

Production Designer

Carlos Conti

Original Music

Sylvain Chomet

Franc Monbaylet

Sound

Jean-Paul Mugal

Olivier Walczak

Sébastien Wéra

Emmanuel Crosset

Costume Designer

Olivier Bériot

©Eurowide Film

Production, Pathé

Production, France 3

Cinéma, Appaloosa

Développement

Production

Companies

Eurowide Film

Production and Pathé

present a Eurowide

Film Production,

Pathé, France 3

Cinéma, Appaloosa

Développement

co-production in

association with

Hoche Images,

Cofinova 9, Manon 3

with the support

of the Procirep

Executive Producer

François-Xavier

Decraene

CAST

Guillaume Gouix

Paul/Attila Marcel

Anne Le Ny

Madame Proust

Bernadette Lafont

Aunt Annie

Hélène Vincent

Aunt Anna

Luis Rego

Mr Coelho

Jean-Claude Dreyfus

Mr Kruzinsky

Fanny Tournon

Anita

Kea Kaing

Michelle

Cyril Couton

doctor

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Metrodrome

Distribution Ltd

Paris, the present. Paul Marcel, a 33-year-old pianist, has been mute since infancy, when he witnessed the death of his parents Anita and Attila, a memory that he has repressed. He lives with his two elderly aunts, overbearing dance instructors for whom he works as accompanist. The aunts are training him for a piano competition.

A chance encounter leads Paul to the flat of his neighbour, ukulele-playing hippie Mme Proust. She gives him a herbal infusion, which allows him to unlock his memories when he hears a significant piece of music. Soon, Paul is paying Mme Proust regular visits, gradually piecing together the mystery of his parents’ demise. During a visit to the seaside, he meets cellist Michelle, who flirts with him.

Finding out that Mme Proust has been helping Paul to recover his memory, the aunts attack her, though they discover she is dying of cancer. An infusion-fuelled, hallucination-filled performance wins Paul the music competition. He takes a final dose of herbs and remembers that his parents, professional wrestlers, were killed when the aunts’ piano fell through the floor and into their apartment below. Paul confronts the aunts, who beg for forgiveness, but he deliberately breaks his fingers, ending his concert career. He discovers that Mme Proust has died. Paul visits her grave and finds her ukulele.

Some time later. Now a ukulele teacher, Paul visits Hawaii with Michelle and their baby daughter.

Ballet Boys

Norway 2014
Director: Kenneth Elvebakk
Certificate 12A 74m 56s

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

Modest in both scale and scope, this documentary's main challenge to convention is in presenting its three teenage male subjects as kindly, hardworking and empathetic creatures rather than self-involved libidos on legs.

Following 14-year-old Oslo-based dance students Lukas, Syvert and Torgeir as they prepare for their auditions for the Norwegian Ballet Academy, the film sensitively portrays their adolescent awkwardness, sweetly jocular friendship and different levels of talent, potential and commitment. However, it actively bodyswerves opportunities to go deeper or complicate its narrative. The boys' repeated assertion that not many of their gender are interested in ballet goes unexamined, as does a jarring declaration by Syvert, who is of Asian origin, that he would prefer to be "just Norwegian – well, white". When Lukas is accepted into London's Royal Ballet School, he and his parents fret over the €40,000 fees as if it's a make-or-break issue; but the film then simply packs him off to England, without explaining how they've dealt with the problem. Scenes of the boys dancing, meanwhile, tend to be brief, and subject to speeding up and jazzy editing, so that one doesn't really feel their immersion in their artform.

The boys are good company but this study of their lifestyle choice is mild to the point of blandness. **S**



Stretching a pointe: Lukas Bjerneboe Brændsrød

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Carsten Aanonsen
Script
Kenneth Elvebakk
Director of Photography
Torstein Nodland
Editor
Christoffer Heie
Composer
Henrik Skram
Sound Designer
Bernt Syversen

@Indie Film Production Companies
Indie Film presents a film by Kenneth Elvebakk
Supported by
Norwegian Film Institute, Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, Arts Council Norway
Fund for Sound and Image, Fritt Ord

Foundation, NRK

In Colour
[1.78:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Matchbox Films

Norwegian theatrical title
Ballettguttene

Oslo, the present. Lukas, Syvert and Torgeir are 14-year-old part-time students of ballet. As they approach their auditions to enter the Norwegian Ballet Academy, they come under pressure at school to establish an academic back-up plan. Syvert, under pressure from his parents, drops ballet, but the others persist. Lukas reaches the finals of a competition. Syvert returns to classes in time for the auditions. All three boys are accepted, but Lukas also has an audition for London's Royal Ballet School. He is offered a place, which he accepts. Lukas says goodbye to his classmates and friends, and his parents take him to London.

The Expendables 3

USA 2014
Director: Patrick Hughes
Certificate 12A 126m 19s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Among the many life lessons that one takes away from Patrick Hughes's *The Expendables 3*, one of the hardest but most incontrovertible is that Republicans are just plain better screen actors. The only thing that could make this smorgasbord of GOP thespianism more complete is a computer-generated 'Duke' Wayne and Barbara Stanwyck sidling up to the bar in the final reel.

The Expendables 3 is a proper rave-up, this in spite of being called *The Expendables 3*. I say this as one not previously convinced by the latest franchise of the unsinkable Sylvester Stallone, who has starred in all three *Expendables* films as Barney Ross, fearless, swollen leader of the eponymous gang of middle-aged soldiers of fortune. As the film opens, Ross and his most loyal teammates (Randy Couture, Dolph Lundgren and Jason Statham) free a former Expendable from a military prison. After a bravura opening in which the newly liberated inmate very nearly kamikazes a speeding armoured train into the prison walls, one of the Expendables asks, "Why'd you get locked away?" His tongue-in-cheek answer is "Tax evasion" – a joke that only works because the sprung ex-teammate is played by the inimitable Wesley Snipes, who has just finished serving three years for exactly that.

The Expendables 3 indulges in a few such riffs

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Danny Lerner
Les Weldon
John Thompson
Avi Lerner
Kevin King-Templeton
Screenplay
Sylvester Stallone
Creighton Rothenberger
Katrin Benedikt
Story
Sylvester Stallone
Based on characters created by David Callahan
Director of Photography
Peter Menzies Jr
Edited by
Sean Albertson
Paul Harb
Production Designer
Daniel T. Dorrance
Music
Bryan Tyler
Production Sound Mixer
Vladimir Kaloyanov
Costume Designer
Lizz Wolf
Stunt Co-ordinator
Brad Martin

@Ex3 Productions, Inc.
Production Companies
Lionsgate and Millennium Films present a Nu Image production
A film by Patrick Hughes
Executive Producers
Jon Feltheimer
Jason Constantine
Eda Kowan
Basil Iwanyk
Guymon Casady
Trevor Short
Boaz Davidson

CAST

Sylvester Stallone
Barney Ross
Jason Statham
Lee Christmas
Antonio Banderas
Gallo
Jet Li
Yin Yang
Wesley Snipes
Doctor Death, 'Doc'
Dolph Lundgren
Gunner Jensen
Kelsey Grammer

Bonaparte
Randy Couture
Toll Road
Terry Crews
Hale Caesar
Kellan Lutz
Smilee
Ronda Rousey
Luna
Glen Powell
Thorn
Victor Ortiz
Mars
Robert Davi
Goran Vata
Mel Gibson
Conrad Stonebanks
Harrison Ford
Max Drummer
Arnold Schwarzenegger
Trench

Dolby Digital In Colour
[2.35:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

The present day. Barney Ross and his Expendables (a team of elite mercenaries) free Doctor Death, a former Expendable, from a speeding prison train. The crew travel to Somalia, where they have been hired to interrupt an arms deal. Expendable Hale Caesar is gravely injured by the arms trader Conrad Stonebanks, a former Expendable whom Ross had presumed dead. Fearing for the safety of his friends, Ross retires them and recruits a new, younger team. When the new recruits are promptly captured in action and held hostage by Stonebanks, Ross must reunite with his old teammates to rescue them, which they do, killing Stonebanks and narrowly escaping from an imploding building.



Jason Statham, Wesley Snipes

on the personas of its assembled stars. When Harrison Ford's CIA operative says "I haven't had so much fun in years" you believe that the actor, who has rarely evinced pleasure in being in front of a camera since 1995 or so, might be telling the truth. Unlike the last *Expendables* outing, which mined exhausted memes such as Chuck Norris Facts for laughs, this go-around doesn't allow itself to become mired in self-referentiality. The plot is basically a pretext for Stallone to record duets with one and then another member of his all-star cast: to be worn down by a motor-mouthed Antonio Banderas, providing Pepé Le Pew comic relief with great gusto, or falling for a black comic put-on by Kelsey Grammer, playing a kind-of mercenary talent scout who leads Barney to a new team once he decides he can no longer put his old friends' lives on the line. The lone standout in this new class, in gender and in her poise in action, is MMA superstar Ronda Rousey, following the path blazed by Gina 'Crush' Carano to the big screen. (Stallone, a canny opportunist who knows that #feminism is trending hard, has spoken of a forthcoming all-female *Expendables*.)

The evident 'bitter exes' jealousy that the old *Expendables* express on seeing Barney with his new playmates touches on the latent homosocial subtext of the whole enterprise, explicitly acknowledged in a closing scene in which Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jet Li canoodle familiarly in the New Orleans dive bar that the team call home base. And who else to play the foe to this new, gender-inclusive, queer-friendly *Expendables* than Mr Mel Gibson, who gives a better performance as a character named 'Conrad Stonebanks' than anyone has a right to, battered but fiercely alive, smouldering with betrayal and raging against the hypocrisy of his former friends? (Again, the self-reflexivity is at play: Stonebanks is himself a former Expendable, left behind by Ross and co as Gibson has largely been shunned by Hollywood.)

"Why don't you check your own hands for blood," Stonebanks/Gibson spits at Ross – and, sure enough, *Expendables 3* is plenty ensanguinated. Minimising the reliance on close-ups of actors with jowls jumping as they empty machine guns, Aussie director Hughes and his team do commendable work on the set pieces, which include a final half-hour that has the *Expendables* under siege in a brutalist lump of a building rigged to blow sky-high at any minute. "It's a great plan... it's 1985," one of the tech-savvy Junior *Expendables* says of Barney's blunt-force technique, but coming out for their big encore, this 80s action reunion tour finally fires on all cylinders. **S**

Get On Up

USA/Japan 2014
Director: Tate Taylor

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

With his 2012 feature *The Help* director Tate Taylor offered little indication that he'd be the most appropriate choice to bring the life of the electrifying James Brown to the screen. Yet within moments, any notions that Taylor has played it safe are up in smoke; PCP smoke, to be precise. *Get On Up* begins in Atlanta in 1988, where an evidently high Brown (Chadwick Boseman, giving an energetic and charismatic performance) marches into his offices and reacts furiously on discovering that an interloper has used his toilet. Brown fires his shotgun into the ceiling, reprimands the culprit, then stares straight down the camera, beckoning us to join him on his journey of memory. Repurposing this bizarre incident – which allegedly really happened – is a disarming way to kick off a major Hollywood biopic, and is microcosmic of what follows: a portrait that's irreverent, loose and often fun but also deeply strange, chronically undisciplined and never quite serious enough about its subject.

Beginning with Brown at his lowest point might imply that a traditional rags-to-riches-to-rags arc is to come, but Taylor and British screenwriters Jez and John-Henry Butterworth fashion an elastic narrative which, initially at least, places proceedings closer to experimental cinema. Their approach is reminiscent of Shirley Clarke's *Ornette: Made in America* (1985), an elliptical documentary about saxophonist Ornette Coleman that used an actor to portray its subject as a child in flashbacks, and François Girard's *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* (1993), in which discrete stories clattered together to conjure an impressionistic vision of its pianist subject. In its first 20 or so minutes alone, *Get On Up* hops from Vietnam in 1968 (where a boisterous Brown arrives to play music and harangue the US army) to dreamlike passages of a troubled childhood in 1939 Alabama, where alcoholism, abuse and nebulously rendered racism lurk in the shadows. We then jump from a 1964 support gig for The Rolling Stones to a press conference at

an airport (a scenario that's frequently returned to, and acts as the closest thing the film has to a framing device). The filmmakers' desire to do something different with the form is laudable, but the bizarre editing and wild tonal oscillations prove exhausting rather than exhilarating.

Though the film's bells, whistles, smoke and mirrors ultimately render Brown an enigma, Boseman's nuanced performance hints at a transformation from cocky extrovert into a shark-like businessman who's as much a performer offstage as on it. It's telling that the sudden death of Brown's manager Ben Bart (Dan Aykroyd) is depicted as the life event that hits Brown the hardest. The death of his son Teddy in 1973, by contrast, is skirted over, while the portrayal of his relationship with wife Deirdre (Jill Scott) is comically undercooked. If it is Brown who's telling this story, as the inconsistently applied fourth-wall breakage implies, it never feels as if he has much control over it. Sometimes, the use of the straight-to-camera gambit is downright bewildering, as with the scene where Brown punches his wife, then wanders up to the camera and stares at the viewer with a gormless expression.

Get On Up's biggest flaw – other than the rather pedestrian musical sequences and a tendency to suggest that Brown's talent was somehow magical rather than the result of rigorous practice – is its failure to engage directly with why Brown meant so much to African-American audiences in the 1960s and 70s. Brown was a contradictory figure – he considered arch-segregationist South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond a mentor – but his commitment to black self-actualisation was unambiguous and influential. One snippet of 'Say It Loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud' and a couple of shots of Brown sporting a dashiki hardly suffice. The filmmakers (a white director and two white screenwriters) have the time to include cosily apologetic jokes about the white appropriation, and misunderstanding of, black culture, but they'd have been better served tackling what made Brown's black audiences tick. **S**

Grand Piano

Spain/USA 2012
Director: Eugenio Mira
Certificate 15 90m 17s

Reviewed by Michael Blyth

As far as high-concept plotlines go, *Grand Piano's* central conceit is just about as preposterous as you can get. Living up to its reputation as 'Speed on a piano', Eugenio Mira's film is a mostly successful slice of improbability, elevated by the gratifying sense that the audience is invited to chuckle along with it rather than at it.

A neatly paced, expository first act establishes that Tom Selznick, a once renowned concert pianist, is returning to the stage for the first time in five years, haunted by a disastrous performance of a notoriously challenging piece called 'La Cinquette'. As a nervous Tom takes to the podium, he encounters a fate worse than mere stage fright, when it is revealed that a homicidal maniac is targeting him, threatening to execute him and his wife if he should hit a wrong note.

With the plot mechanics thankfully out of the way, Mira is left to show off via a symphony of visual gimmicks. If the sustained set pieces are unashamedly indebted to Hitchcock (how can one not think of the orchestral denouement to *The Man Who Knew Too Much?*), then the elaborate long takes, swirling camera moves and neat use of split screen read like an open love letter to Brian De Palma, albeit without his particular penchant for sleaze. Full credit to Mira, however, for one applause-worthy moment: an ingenious jump cut from a throat being slit to a bow slicing its way across taut cello strings.

Writer Damien Chazelle, whose acclaimed directorial effort *Whiplash* documents a young drummer's tumultuous time at an elite conservatory, further displays



Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Brian Grazer
Mick Jagger
Victoria Pearson
Erica Huggins
Tate Taylor
Screenplay
Jez Butterworth
John-Henry Butterworth
Story
Steven Baigelman
Jez Butterworth
John-Henry Butterworth
Director of

Photography

Stephen Goldblatt
Edited by
Michael McCusker
Production Design
Mark Ricker
Music
Thomas Newman
Production
Sound Mixer
Steve Morrow
Costume Designer
Sharen Davis

©Universal Studios
Production

Companies

Universal Pictures
and Imagine
Entertainment
present a Jagged
Films/Brian Grazer
production in
association with
Wyolah Films
A Tate Taylor film
Presented in
association with
Dentsu Inc./
Fuji Television
Network, Inc.
Executive Producers

Peter Afterman
Trish Hofmann
Jez Butterworth
John-Henry
Butterworth
John Norris
Anna Culp

CAST

Chadwick Boseman
James Brown
Nelsan Ellis
Bobby Byrd
Dan Aykroyd
Ben Bart

Viola Davis
Susie Brown
Lennie James
Joe Brown
Fred Melamed
Syd Nathan
Craig Robinson
Maceo Parker
Jill Scott
Deirdre Brown,
'DeeDee'
Octavia Spencer
Aunt Honey
Josh Hopkins
Ralph Bass
Brandon Smith

Little Richard
Tika Sumpter
Yvonne Fair

Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
Colour by
Fotokem
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International
UK & Eire

This biopic of soul singer James Brown begins in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1988. Brown fires a shotgun into the roof during a business meeting taking place in a building he owns. The film flashes back to 1968, when Brown travels to Vietnam as a performer, and further back to Georgia in 1939, where we see the young Brown's mother being forced from the family home by his abusive, alcoholic father. The film then charts Brown's rise to fame. In 1949, he serves time in jail for theft, and on release becomes friends with former fellow inmate Bobby Byrd. The pair, along with a group

of other acquaintances, start the band The Famous Flames, but it's Brown who steals the limelight. He becomes a successful solo artist under the aegis of manager Ben Bart. Brown marries Deirdre. In 1968, Brown's backing band desert him because he hasn't paid them. Byrd stays loyal but Brown alienates him in 1971, when he reacts furiously to Byrd's suggestion that he might embark on his own solo career. The film returns to 1988; Brown is chased by police, caught and sentenced to jail. On his release he patches things up with Byrd and resumes his career as a solo performer.



In harm's Steinway: John Cusack

his commitment to capturing the more exhilarating aspects of musical performance on screen. Ironically there is nothing here to quite match the frenetic tension he achieves in his own film, which strives for dramatic authenticity as opposed to outlandish thrills, but perhaps this is where *Grand Piano*'s main problem lies: when the plot is so implausible, the stakes don't seem quite as high. Still, Mira's film is a tidy and efficient diversion, and while classical music buffs will no doubt scoff at the countless liberties it takes, genre fans may well be won over by its infectious commitment to absurdity. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Adrián Guerra
Rodrigo Cortés

Written by
Damien Chazelle

Director of

Photography

Unax Mendia

Edited by

J.L. Romeu

Production

Designer

Javier Alvarinho

Music

Victor Reyes

Sound Mixer

Albert Manera

Costume Designer

Patricia Monné

©Nostromo

Canarias 1 AIE,

Nostromo Pictures

SL, Grand Piano

Productions LLC, A3

Films SLU, Telefónica

Producciones SLU

Production

Companies

A Nostromo

Pictures production

in association

with The Solution

Entertainment

Group,
Artesmediacine,
Telefónica

Producciones

With the

participation of

Antena 3 Televisión,

Televisió de

Catalunya, S.A.

and the support

of Instituto de la

Cinematografía y

Artes Audiovisuales

(ICAA), Institut

Català de les

Indústries

Culturals (ICIC)

Executive

Producers

Núria Vallés

Lisa Wilson

Myles Nestel

Mikel Lejarza

Mercedes Gamero

CAST

Elijah Wood

Tom Selznick

John Cusack

Clem

Kerry Bishé

Emma Selznick

Tamsin Egerton

Ashley

New York, present day. Famed pianist Tom Selznick anxiously prepares to take to the stage for the first time since a disastrous performance of the notoriously difficult 'La Cinquette' five years earlier. Tom's wife Emma, a famous film actor, arrives at the auditorium, joined by friends Ashley and Wayne. On stage, Tom discovers that his sheet music carries an ominous message threatening his life should he play a wrong note. He soon realises that he is being stalked by Clem, a maniac determined to hear a flawless rendition of 'La Cinquette'. Though Clem warns Tom that any attempt to ask for help will result in Emma's death, Tom secretly calls Wayne on his mobile phone. Wayne alerts a security guard. The guard – who is in fact working for Clem – kills Wayne. Ashley discovers Wayne's body and is also killed by the guard. Clem informs Tom that within the piano lies the key to a fortune hidden by the piano's previous owner, Tom's former tutor Patrick, now deceased. The key can be obtained only if the final four bars of 'La Cinquette' are played perfectly. Tom performs the piece but deliberately plays a wrong final note. The audience rapturously applauds Tom's performance, and Emma is asked to sing as a special addition to the programme. As Emma performs, Tom runs off stage and confronts Clem. They fight in the rafters above the stage. As Emma finishes her song, Tom and Clem fall. Clem lands on the piano and is killed. As the broken piano is prepared for removal, Tom plays the last part of 'La Cinquette' perfectly and waits to see if the key is revealed.

Guardians of the Galaxy

USA 2014

Director: James Gunn

Certificate 12A 120m 42s



Freaky fly day: Zoe Saldana, Chris Pratt, Vin Diesel, Dave Bautista

Reviewed by Kim Newman

So far, Marvel/Disney's interlocking cinema universe has relied on long-running, well-established heroes such as Thor, Iron Man and Captain America – all with name recognition outside the comics ghetto. Now, the company feels secure enough in the overall franchise to dust off lesser-known properties and take a chance. This huge summer release features a clutch of hitherto also-ran and fan-favourite characters. It isn't even based on the original Guardians of the Galaxy, who made their debut in 1969 and appeared only sporadically over the decades. Writers Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning brought some unrelated Marvel space-opera characters together for the *Annihilation* miniseries in 2006; the company kept them together to inherit the vacant *Guardians of the Galaxy* title.

Space opera has always been a key component

of Marvel's superhero titles. Even earthbound characters such as the Hulk encountered aliens early in their 1960s runs, and the likes of the Fantastic Four and the Avengers regularly ventured off-planet to get mixed up in galactic politics. Previous Marvel movies have hinted at a cosmic dimension in mid-credits stings (we met Thanos at the end of *Avengers Assemble* and Benicio del Toro's Collector in *Thor: The Dark World*). James Gunn (like Joss Whedon pre-*Avengers*, an interesting genre filmmaker who could do with a movie hit) and co-writer Nicole Perlman daringly open this breezy galactic romp with hero Peter Quill's mother dying of cancer just before he is snatched away to off-world adventure with only a mix-tape of her favourite pop songs to remind him of Earth.

Gunn has superhero previous, having written the underrated *The Specials* (2000) and directed

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Kevin Feige

Written by

James Gunn

Nicole Perlman

Director of

Photography

Ben Davis

Editors

Fred Raskin

Craig Wind

Hughes Winbourne

Production Designer

Charles Wood

Music

Tyler Bates

Supervising

Sound Editor/

Sound Designer

Christopher Boyes

Costume Designer

Alexandra Byrne

Visual Effects

Framestore

MPC

Luma Pictures

Method Studios

Lola VFX

Cantina Creative

Sony Pictures

Imageworks Inc.

CoSA VFX

Secret Lab

Technicolor VFX

Stunt Co-ordinator

Steve Dent

©Marvel

Production

Company

Marvel Studios

presents a James

Gunn film

Executive Producers

Nik Korda

Stan Lee

Victoria Alonso

Jeremy Latcham

Alan Fine

Louis Desposito

CAST

Chris Pratt

Peter Quill

Zoe Saldana

Gamora

Dave Bautista

Drax the Destroyer

Vin Diesel

voice of Groot

Bradley Cooper

voice of Rocket

Lee Pace

Ronan the Accuser

Michael Rooker

Yondu Udonta

Karen Gillan

Nebula

Djimon Hounsou

Korath

John C. Reilly

Corpsman Dey

Glenn Close

Nova Prime

Benicio del Toro

The Collector

[uncredited]

Josh Brolin

Thanos

Dolby Digital/

Dolby Atmos

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Some screenings

presented in 3D

Distributor

Buena Vista

International (UK)

Earth, 1988. Young Peter Quill is abducted by an alien spaceship. Under the tutelage of mercenary captain Yondu, Quill becomes an outlaw known as Star-Lord.

In the present day, Quill deserts Yondu after obtaining the infinity stone, an object of great power. The stone is sought by Ronan the Accuser, whose race (the Kree) has just signed a peace treaty with Xandar, homeworld of the Nova Corps galactic police force. Ignoring the treaty, Ronan intends to destroy Xandar. He sends Gamora, the adopted daughter of his patron Thanos, to obtain the stone, but she rebels

against him. Quill, Gamora and bounty hunters Rocket (a talking raccoon) and Groot (an intelligent tree) are condemned by the Nova Corps to a prison, where they encounter Drax the Destroyer, who has sworn to avenge the death of his family by killing Ronan. The five band together to escape and profit from the stone, but eventually find themselves battling Ronan to save Xandar, taking on the power of the stone to obliterate him. Quill learns that his absentee father was an alien. Drax vows to destroy Thanos. The group stay together as the Guardians of the Galaxy.

The Guest

USA/United Kingdom 2013

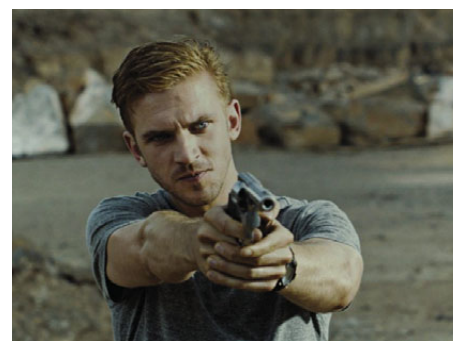
Director: Adam Wingard

Certificate 15 99m 34s

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

Under a lowering New Mexico sky, a scarecrow adorned with a jack-o'-lantern visage looks on as an unidentified runner approaches town. These portentous images, underscored by synths of doom, are the first we see in *The Guest*, the latest retro-tinged thriller from the prolific indie-horror team of writer Simon Barrett and director Adam Wingard. Excise them, and you could easily imagine the ensuing events playing out a little differently; a tense psychodrama maybe, but not the full-blooded carnage being prepared. Barrett and Wingard's prior collaborations similarly feature set-ups that might well take alternative directions, in so doing supplying a canny (if ultimately limited) rejigging of slasher-film mechanics: in *A Horrible Way to Die* (2010), the tentative romance between two recovering alcoholics distracts from the serial-killer plot running in tandem, while an acrimonious family gathering in *You're Next* (2011) fleetingly suggests a *Festen*-style comedy of embarrassment – that is, until the machete-wielding intruders show up to ruin dinner. *The Guest*, meanwhile, seems to speculate how Jason Bourne might function reimagined as an implacable agent of chaos.

As with *You're Next*, a dysfunctional family unit is invaded by a malign presence. But compared to the upfront terror unleashed in that film, the disquieting influence exerted by *The Guest*'s David Collins (Dan Stevens) is representative of a much more insidious game plan, familiar from many a story where a vulnerable household is disrupted by a charismatic stranger. Bereft after the loss of eldest son Caleb in Afghanistan, the Peterson clan are prime targets for manipulation. The handsome, deferential David abruptly arrives on their doorstep claiming to have served alongside Caleb, and it isn't long before he's staying the night, and then the night after that. David is a comfort to listless mum Laura, a confidant to stressed-out, downtrodden dad Spencer and – in one of many scenes of deadpan black comedy – a startling deliverer of brutal retribution to the jocks tormenting younger son Luke. Only stultified daughter Anna (Maika Monroe) isn't



Downton crabby: Dan Stevens

convinced, although she in time develops confused feelings for the interloper. She's the movie's most fully formed character – one minute dreamily creating a CD compilation for David, the next worriedly snooping into his background.

Played superbly by Stevens, David nonetheless remains something of a sketch throughout. Obviously, the filmmakers need to preserve his enigmatic status to an extent, but his modus operandi is defiantly fuzzy; occasionally he appears fixated on an endgame and exit plan, hinted at from clandestine phone calls eavesdropped on by Anna, but more often gets sidetracked by random acts of malice. A side plot involving the pursuit of David by a special agent (Lance Reddick) from a shady military contractor is conspicuously thin, dealt with in a few terse lines of dialogue. However, Wingard's irreverent, gleefully overblown line of attack proves entertaining enough to overcome this in the film's frenetic latter half. Here more than ever, the director seems to announce himself as an acolyte of John Carpenter: laconic humour, punchy action sequences and unnerving widescreen framing take precedence, bolstered by Steve Moore's pulsating electro score. Setting events at Halloween seems an unnecessary indulgence, as does the finale's overload of horror iconography – it's as if Wingard and Barrett don't trust an audience to recognise David as a modern bogeyman without forceful reminders. Still, their lean, ludicrous film never outstays its welcome. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jessica Calder
Executive Producers
Simon Barrett
Thorsten
Schumacher
Written by
Simon Barrett
Director of Photography
Robby Baumgartner
Edited by
Adam Wingard
Production Designer
Thomas S. Hammock
Music
Steve Moore
Production Sound Mixer
Rodney Gurule
Costume Designer
Kathleen Detoro

©Adam David
Productions LLC
Production Companies
A Snoot
Entertainment
production in
association with

HartWay Films
Executive Producers
Simon Barrett
Thorsten
Schumacher

CAST

Dan Stevens
'David Collins'
Maika Monroe
Anna Peterson
Leland Orser
Spencer Peterson
Sheila Kelley
Laura Peterson
Brendan Meyer
Luke Peterson
Chase Williamson
Zeke
Ethan Embry
Higgins
Joel David Moore
Craig
Lance Reddick
Major Carver

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor
Icon Film Distribution

US, present day. A young soldier, David Collins, visits Laura and Spencer Peterson, claiming to have been a close friend of their eldest son, who was killed in action. Invited to stay, David quickly ingratiates himself with the Peterson family; he beats up some bullies who have been tormenting younger son Luke, and captivates rebellious daughter Anna. David murders Anna's friend Craig and frames her boyfriend Zeke for the crime. Spencer is promoted at work when his boss is found dead; it's implied that David is responsible. Becoming suspicious, Anna contacts the military, who inform her that the real David Collins was among those killed by an unexplained fire at an army hospital. David deflects her fears by insisting that the fire is a cover story to protect his identity. Carver, an agent for a military contractor, fails to capture David, who escapes after killing Laura and Spencer. Carver reveals to Anna that David was selected as an outstanding candidate for a covert army experiment, but escaped after causing the fire. Carver and Anna pursue David to Luke's high school. David kills Carver but is himself apparently killed by Luke. As the school burns, Anna thinks that she spots David exit disguised as a fireman.

the hard-edged *Super* (2010), and has shown his nous with established properties by scripting the *Dawn of the Dead* remake (2004) and the *Scooby-Doo* reboot (2002). But even his smart, gross SF/horror hybrid *Slither* (2006) failed to get the crossover audience it deserved. Here, he gets to do big-scale space battles and set pieces, but it's still a character-based film. In the 1960s, it was the marriage of Jack Kirby's ambitious spectacle with Stan Lee's wisecracks that distinguished Marvel from the competition – Lee and Kirby created the tree warrior Groot in a one-off 1960 monster strip, and introduced Ronan the Accuser in 1967 as part of a developing plot involving the blue-skinned Kree race – and their mix is evoked continuously here, though latterday creators like Abnett and Lanning deserve credit for this particular combination of characters and story threads.

The plot, at once simplistic and hard to follow, is nothing special, vaguely echoing Roy Thomas's Kree-Skrull war and Jim Starlin's cosmic storylines with a macguffin of great power, just because they're bad baddies and a succession of serial-style escapes and confrontations. The script is a spaghetti tangle of individual character arcs. Luckily, the characters are all engaging and reasonably fresh, and casting second-tier names such as Chris Pratt and Zoe Saldana in the leads pays off, as they have to fight for attention in a way Robert Downey Jr doesn't. Bradley Cooper and Vin Diesel voice CGI characters (Rocket Raccoon represents a strand of Marvel understandably off screen since *Howard the Duck*), wrestler Dave Bautista brings surprising charm as literalist warrior Drax, John C. Reilly is warm as the universe's honest cop, and Michael Rooker hams genially as piratical Yondu (sole survivor of the original *Guardians* line-up), creating a populated, thriving, threatening yet appealing universe where 70s rock is still catching on.

In tone, this feels like the odder, cheaper *Star Wars* imitations of the 1980s (*Battle Beyond the Stars*, *The Last Starfighter*) but with state-of-the-art effects that deliver astonishing throwaways such as a space boom town built in the severed head of a godlike alien giant or a Nova Corps fleet linking to form a net to trap Ronan's enormous spaceship. However, it also manages to provide goofy humour (Quill using the plot of *Footloose* to inspire Saldana's Gamora to emulate "the great hero Kevin Bacon" or trying to divert the all-powerful Ronan into having a dance-off instead of a pitched battle) and neat little scroll-back moments (a dog in a CCCP space helmet found in the Collector's collection) for much of the running time, then deliver strong emotional beats such as the tree warrior Groot's self-sacrifice in transforming himself into a thick nest to save his comrades from a spaceship crash (a cutting survives, however – watered by the raccoon's tears).

Guardians of the Galaxy bests Warner/DC's 2011 *Green Lantern* movie in finding a bridge between superheroics and space opera, which is ironic given that the Nova Corps intergalactic police force – here bossed by Glenn Close as Nick Fury on a cosmic scale – is Marvel's imitation of the Green Lantern Corps. As a second mom's mix-tape is discovered, a Bond-style title promises, with justified confidence, that the Guardians of the Galaxy will return... **S**

The Guvnors

United Kingdom/Ireland 2014
Director: Gabe Turner
Certificate 15 94m 55s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

Middle-aged Mitch (Doug Allen) may have a respectable City job, his own home, a loving wife (Melanie Gutteridge), a worshipful teenage son (Cameron Lee Farrelly) and all the mod cons of a successful life, but he still wears scars on his back and tattoos on his shoulder like badges of honour – or disgrace – for a past that will never fully go away. Those same tattoos are clearly visible in the photograph of Mitch's younger self that adorns the front cover of a book about football violence, which his son is covertly reading as inspiration for his new career as a school bully. Meanwhile, on Mitch's old south-east London estate, young parentless Adam (musician Harley Sylvester, excellent) is making the transition from bully to gangster, terrorising any perceived grass or rival drug dealer with a box cutter, the weapon of choice with which he makes others share the same deep scars that are etched into his own face. His is the world that, 20 years earlier, Mitch managed to escape. But now, after Mitch's old mentor Mickey (David Essex) becomes a victim of Adam's rise, Mitch returns to reconvene his old firm, the Guvnors, for revenge and possible redemption.

"I don't want you to become me," Mitch tells his son, "You're better than that." Yet all those tattoos and scars represent a legacy of violence, handed down from one abandoned age to the next: this tale of the old school and the YouTube generation sees both a clash – and a perpetuation – of toxic values.

Previously known for the football-related documentaries *In the Hands of the Gods* (2007) and *The Class of '92* (2013), writer/director Gabe Turner sidesteps the pitfalls of glorifying brutality or lionising its aggressive avatars by focusing less on action and more on its consequences – consequences that, he is careful to show, can take many years to unravel for those who get to live long enough.

Adjectives like 'gritty' have become part of



No man's gangland: Harley Sylvester

the territory of the British gangland film, but far from being all 'realist' greys and grime, *The Guvnors* offers a colourful, stylised picture that contrasts Mitch's well-appointed house, his City office, Adam's blue-tinted council flat, the claustrophobic estate (half maze, half amphitheatre) and the pub where Mitch's gang used to hang out (aptly described by Adam as "a timewarp... like a badly decorated job centre"). Quotations from Mark Twain on the subjects of corrosive anger and the fear of death universalise an otherwise local saga, while the revelation of just what connects Mitch to Adam besides a shared propensity for power play elevates these barroom brawls and street scraps to the sort of internecine, intergenerational struggle associated with a grand dynastic tragedy. Perhaps *The Guvnors* is punching above its weight, but you have to admire the ambition of this myth of fathers and sons, unable to break free of one vicious cycle without creating another down the line. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Danny Potts
Leo Pearlman

Written by

Gabe Turner

Director of Photography

James Friend

Edited by

Emiliano Battista

Production Designer

Paul Burns

Composer

Paul Burns

Sound Recordists

Mikael Hasler

Costume Designer

Chloe Gross

Executive Producers

Joe Moore

CAST

Harley Sylvester

Adam

Doug Allen

International, DP

Film Productions and

Creativity Capital a

Gabe Turner film

Executive Producers

Joe Moore

Patrick Fischer

CAST

Harley Sylvester

Adam

Doug Allen

Mitch

Jay Simpson

Neil

Vas Blackwood

Bill

Charlie Palmer-

Merkell

Trey

Martin Hancock

PC Meyler

David Essex

Mickey Sr

Melanie Gutteridge

Angie

Cameron Lee

Farrelly

Alfie

Tony Denham

Trent

Paul Reynolds

Tone

Marley Lockhart

Tyler

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Metrodome

Distribution Ltd

London, the present. Having turned his back on his legendary gang the Guvnors 20 years ago to settle down with Angie and a job in the City, middle-aged Mitch dissuades his teenage son Alfie from becoming a school bully.

Meanwhile parentless teen Adam lives on Mitch's old estate in south-east London. When not looking after his brother Tyler, Adam terrorises the estate's criminal and civilian populace alike. When policeman (and ex-Guvnor) Meyler tells Adam that his brand of hooliganism would not have been countenanced back in the Guvnors' day, Adam goes looking for trouble at the Guvnors' old pub, only to be knocked down by the gang's one-time mentor/boxing trainer Mickey. When a

YouTube clip of his defeat goes viral, a humiliated Adam breaks into the pub with his gang and kicks Mickey to death.

Wanting an end to the violence as much as revenge, Mitch regroups the Guvnors, now all middle-aged and still resentful at their former leader for abandoning them decades earlier. Confronting Adam in his flat, Mitch realises that the boy is his own illegitimate son. He tells Adam to quit the gang life, as he himself once did. Adam ignores Mitch; the next day, in a pitched street battle between his own gang and the Guvnors, he shoots Mitch dead.

In prison, Adam reads a fatherly letter written to him by Mitch just before they clashed. Outside, Alfie confronts Tyler.

Hector and the Search for Happiness

Germany/Canada/United Kingdom/United Arab Emirates
2014, Director: Peter Chelsom, Certificate 15 119m 45s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Describing a film as resembling a self-help book is usually uncomplimentary. This time it's a plain fact. Peter Chelsom's glossy, determinedly feelgood comedy-drama is the screen adaptation of François Lelord's bestselling fable-cum-life-manual about the globetrotting enlightenment of Hector (played by Simon Pegg) a psychiatrist afflicted with 'affluenza' who seeks the secret of happiness, laying out his discoveries as a set of rules for life. Chelsom, who has brought considerable charm to projects both personal (*Hear My Song*, *The Mighty*) and commercial (*Serendipity*) during a long career, infuses as much jaunty fun into Lelord's slender tale as it will bear. But the film's USP is the Hallmark-card-worthy 'Rules' from Hector's journal that are handwritten across the screen ("Happiness is being loved for who you are"). They inspired a few jotted rules in turn from the jaundiced reviewer.

Rule 1: a popular book can be a millstone as well as a magnet. The film retains the book's picaresque form, though thankfully not its voice of childlike simplicity (it's the *Le Petit Prince* of pop-psychology). On screen, this translates into a gently trotting plot, initially hampered by an avuncular authorial voiceover intoning what is already evident from Hector's bored round of interchangeable patients and cosy home life. For added authenticity, Hector's notebook sketches and musings skitter over the image periodically, breaking Rule 2: the only place for scribbled quotes on screen is Instagram.

Perhaps to compensate for the rambling story development, there is a slew of glamorous if predictable montages of Hector's travels, spotlighting racy Shanghai nightclubs, awe-inspiring Chinese mountaintops or good-natured African street life and prompting Rule 3: happy-times compilations are only good for mobile-phone adverts or an upmarket gap-year video. Nonetheless, this *Eat Pray Love* use of handsome locations (and some cutely lo-fi jiggling toy planes) serves to underline Hector's timidity and wonder at the world. The only character of any depth or complexity, he's simultaneously an anxious everyman and an insatiably curious hero, whose nakedly symbolic anxiety dreams about Tintin-inspired flights are woven through the plot.

Rule 4: you can hang a movie on one Pegg. Chelsom keeps the film bobbing cheerfully along by smart overreliance on Pegg's comic affability and mild bewilderment as An Englishman Abroad. It's a gentler, far less laddish humour than that of Pegg and Nick Frost's 'Cornetto' trilogy – a slightly wistful comedy of fear of commitment and early midlife crisis. Stretched as an actor well beyond anything required of him in the *Star Trek* or *Mission Impossible* series, he is an appealing presence here, radiating a sincerity he hasn't shown to date. The script, co-written by Chelsom, Maria von Heland and Tinker Lindsay, takes rattling detours from comedy into a sweaty African kidnapping drama, romantic angst and pure whimsy. But Pegg carries it off nimbly, as does Rosamund Pike, squeezing a variety of reactions from sidelined girlfriend Clara. The supporting cast, which includes cynical fellow travellers Stellan

Skarsgård and Jean Reno, fall foul of Rule 5: when casting big talents, don't give small portions.

Periodically misty-eyed about the simple happiness of people in the developing world, the film dips into banality when Hector finally explores his feelings. Christopher Plummer, hokily convivial as a psychology expert, traduces the public understanding of affective neuroscience by employing a test-your-brain machine which lights up risibly like a mood ring when Hector finds joy. Rather than the secret of happiness, my notebook contained one last insight. Rule 6: there is a thin line between moving and mawkish. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Judy Tossell
Klaus Dohle
Christine Haebler
Trish Dolman
Producers
Phil Hunt
Compton Ross
Christian Angermayer
Screenplay
Maria von Heland
Peter Chelsom
Tinker Lindsay
Based on the novel

Le Voyage d'Hector ou la recherche du bonheur written by François Lelord

Director of

Photography

Kolja Brandt

Editor

Claus Wehlisch

Production

Designer

Michael Diner

Music

Dan Mangan

Jesse Zubot

Production Sound

Recordist

Mark Noda

Costume Designer

Guy Speranza

©Egoli Tossell Film

and Happiness

Productions Inc.

Production

Companies

An Egoli Tossell Film,

Erftal Film-und

Fernsehproduktion,

Screen Siren

Pictures production

in association with

Head Gear Films,

Star Gate Films,

Metrol Technology

and Film House

Germany

In co-production

with Wild Bunch

Germany,

Construction Film

In co-operation

with ARD Degeto

With the

participation of

Téléfilm Canada

With the support of

Medienboard Berlin-

Brandenburg GmbH,

German Federal

Film Board, German

Federal Film Fund

A Peter Chelsom film

With the

participation of

the Province of

British Columbia

Film Incentive BC

With the assistance

of the Government

of Canada Film or

Video Production Tax

Credit Programme

In association with

Movie Central, The

Movie Network

Developed in

association with

Warner Bros.

Entertainment

GmbH

Developed with the

support of MEDIA

Programme of the

European Union

Executive

Producers

Jens Meurer

Yoshi Nishio

Rainer Puls

Oliver Puls

Marc Gabizon

Markus Aldenhoven

Amelie V. Kienlin

Christine Strobl

Roman Klink

Marc Hansell

Klemens Hallmann

Benjamin Melkman

Alan Howard

Elliott Ross

Fenella Ross

Phil Hope

Kim Arnott

CAST

Simon Pegg

Hector

Toni Collette

Agnes

Rosamund Pike

Clara

Stellan Skarsgård

Edward

Jean Reno

Diego Baresco

Veronica Ferres

Anjali

Barry Atsma

Michael

Ming Zhao

Ying Li

Christopher

Plummer

Professor Coreman

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Koch Media

German

theatrical title

Hectors Reise

oder die Suche

nach dem Glück

London, present day. Bored by his ordered life and self-involved patients, psychiatrist Hector takes a sabbatical from his practice and his girlfriend Clara. He travels the world to search for the secret of happiness. In Shanghai, he falls for beautiful Ying Li but discovers that she's an escort bought by businessman Edward to make him happy. A Buddhist master in a monastery teaches him not to avoid unhappiness. On an African trip he is kidnapped and held for weeks by local gangsters; a chance mention of a drug-baron acquaintance prevents his death. On the plane to Los Angeles he tends to a brain-surgery patient and realises that his talent for helping is real. Hector worries that Clara is leaving him. They break up over the phone. His old flame Agnes confronts him about his emotional squeamishness. On a visit to happiness expert Professor Coreman, Hector is hooked up to a neuroscience test. When Clara calls and tells him she wants to have children with him, Hector's euphoria lights up the brain-testing machine. He marries Clara, having learnt to love fully.

Hercules

Director: Brett Ratner
Certificate 12A 98m 05

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

After Steve Reeves, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Lou Ferrigno and Kevin Sorbo, Dwayne Johnson is the latest muscled performer to embody Greek legend's strongest man, even if his rippling physique convinces rather more than his wooden line readings. Whether besting the Nemean lion or knocking a galloping horse for a loop (clearly cruelty to CGI animals doesn't count), though, he does sell the story's central conundrum – is this Hercules man or demigod? That particular vein of intrigue would seem better sustained in serial form rather than a discrete film drama, and notwithstanding the game efforts of sundry British reliables in the cast (chief baddie John Hurt gets to bellow “Unleash the wolves!”), the rest is a bit of a plod, the bloodless PG-13 scything and bashing of myriad anonymous foes swiftly proving tedious.

Instead of the stylised look of the 300 films, the approach here is to situate the action in a real historical context, redolent of the sword-and-sandal epics of yesteryear. In the circumstances, Dante Spinotti's crisp lensing and the authentic-leaning production design of Jean-Vincent Puzos (fresh from Haneke's *Amour!*) are probably classier than the movie deserves. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Beau Flynn
Barry Levine
Brett Ratner

Screenplay

Ryan J. Condal

Evan Spiliotopoulos

Based on Radical

Comics' *Hercules*

by Steve Moore

Director of

Photography

Dante Spinotti

Edited by

Mark Helfrich

Julia Wong

Production

Designer

Jean-Vincent Puzos

Music

Fernando Velázquez

Sound

Mac Ruth

Costume Designer

Jany Temme

Stunt Coordinator

Allan Poppleton

Visual Effects by

Double Negative

Cinesite

Method Studios

Prime Focus World

Milk VFX

Utopia VFX

Nvizible

Halo

Perpetual Motion
Pictures

Production

Companies

Paramount Pictures

and Metro-Goldwyn-

Mayer Pictures

present a Flynn

Picture Company

production in

association with

Radical Studios

Executive

Producers

Russ Fanger

Jesse Berger

Peter Berg

Sarah Aubrey

Joseph Finnes

King Eurystheus

Peter Mullan

Sitacles

John Hurt

Lord Cotys

Rebecca Ferguson

Ergenia

Dolby Digital/

Dolby Atmos/

SDDS/Datasat

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Some screenings

presented in 3D

Distributor

Paramount

Pictures UK

CAST

Dwayne Johnson

Hercules

Ian McShane

Amphiaras

Rufus Sewell

Autolycus

Aksel Hennie

Tydeus

Ingrid Bolso Berdal

Atalanta

Reece Ritchie

Iolaus

Tobias Santelmann

Rhesus

Macedonia, 358 BC. Captured by pirates, storyteller Iolaus plays up the legend of his uncle Hercules and his 12 labours. Hercules subsequently arrives with his warriors and routs the brigands. They then venture to Thrace to help the lady Ergenia and her father Lord Cotys tackle invading warlord Rhesus. However, their hosts have tricked them – Cotys is a usurper. In turning against him and his ally King Eurystheus, Hercules embraces his legendary status and solves the mystery of his wife and children's bloody murder by Eurystheus. In the ensuing battle, Hercules brings down Thrace's Temple of Hera with his bare hands, crushing Cotys, whose forces then bow down to Hercules.

The Hundred-foot Journey

Director: Lasse Hallström
Certificate PG 122m 15s

Reviewed by Sam Davies

Alfred Hitchcock, George Sluizer, Michael Haneke... to the list of directors who have remade one of their own films we can now add the name of Lasse Hallström.

Outsiders arrive in a stuffy if postcard-perfect French village and ruffle feathers with their delicious food. Conservative locals resist – a racist few resort to violence and even arson – but in the end the love put into the food wins hearts and minds and the day. In 2000 this was the scenario of Hallström's *Chocolat*, adapted from the Joanne Harris novel and starring Juliette Binoche and Johnny Depp. In 2014, with all cocoa-based products replaced by Indian food, it also describes in almost every respect *The Hundred-foot Journey* (adapted from a novel by Richard C. Morais).

There are small differences, of course. For a start the star power is of a far lower wattage. Manish Dayal stars as culinary prodigy and new arrival Hassan Kadam. Charlotte Le Bon is the sous-chef at the competition, a classic French restaurant just 100ft over the road from the Kadams' place. Both are photogenic and likeable but neither commandeer the screen quite like Binoche or Depp. Hallström does try to play up the disruptive energy of the Kadam family's arrival, with Om Puri's patriarch clearly revelling in his role as a bull among the linen-spread tables. On balance, *The Hundred-foot Journey* is not, thankfully, quite as saccharine as *Chocolat*.

But then that's akin to saying that *Lady and the Tramp* was a more streetwise and hardhitting Disney feature than *Dumbo*. In his attempt to wrap audiences in a warm, welcoming hug, Hallström ends up evaporating any sense that anything is at stake. The Kadams are an immigrant family, grieving for a lost matriarch and struggling for a foothold in a hostile society – yet there is little sense of jeopardy, and the success or otherwise of the their restaurant drops from view the moment Hassan makes his 100ft journey to pursue an education in French cuisine over the road.

Like Ridley Scott's *A Good Year* (2006), *The Hundred-foot Journey* is set in a subtly unreal France, so polished by CGI that it's rendered distant, as if even the sunlight has been lacquered. Given this cartoon France and cartoon version of Indian cuisine (symbolised by a little suitcase in which Hassan has preserved four jars of his mother's spices), it feels appropriate



Gastronauts: Manish Dayal, Helen Mirren

that Pixar's *Ratatouille* is the other film evoked here. Hassan's talent sees him race through the kitchen ranks much like Remy the rat in that film, while Helen Mirren's restaurateur Madame Mallory – icy snob and self-appointed nemesis of the Kadam family – shares elements of *Ratatouille*'s joyless restaurant critic Anton Ego. Yet no one in *The Hundred-foot Journey* delivers a soliloquy as nuanced or insightful as Ego's on the relationship between creator and critic. "Food is memories," says one character, blandly enough.

Early on in the film, Hassan's mother teaches him how to cook. "To cook you must kill," she says, "to cook you must make ghosts." This is a vastly more interesting, even contentious statement, but Hallström skims blithely past, apparently without hearing, intent only on stewing up the cinematic equivalent of comfort food. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Steven Spielberg
Oprah Winfrey
Juliet Blake

Screenplay
Steven Knight
Based upon the
novel by Richard
C. Morais

**Director of
Photography**
Linus Sandgren

Edited by
Andrew Mondshein

**Production
Designer**
David Gropman

Music
A.R. Rahman

Sound Mixer
Jean-Marie Blondel

Costume Designer
Pierre-Yves Gayraud

**Production
Companies**
DreamWorks
Pictures and
Reliance
Entertainment

present in
association
with Participant
Media and Image
Nation an Amblin
Entertainment/
Harpo Films
production
A Lasse
Hallström film

**Executive
Producers**
Caroline Hewitt
Carla Gardini
Jeff Skoll
Jonathan King

**Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS**
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
EI Films

CAST
Helen Mirren
Madame Mallory
Om Puri
Papa Kadam
Manish Dayal
Hassan Kadam
Charlotte Le Bon
Marguerite
Amit Shah
Mansur Kadam
Farzana Dua Elahe

Mahira Kadam
Dillon Mitra
Mukhtar Kadam
Aria Pandya
Aisha Kadam
Michel Blanc
Mayor

**See Feature
on page 36**

Reviewed by
Catherine Wheatley

Set in an austere, almost
abandoned Poland during the
early 1960s, director Pawel
Pawlikowski's first feature

made in his homeland is a spare, haunting
piece of minimalism, opening in silence on a
black-and-white close-up of a young novice, the
broad planes of her face calling to mind a young
Renée Jeanne Falconetti. But if this convent-set
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Hassan Kadam is an apprentice chef at his parents' restaurant in India when disaster strikes: a local political dispute spills over and the restaurant is burned to the ground, with Hassan's mother trapped inside. The Kadam family emigrate to Europe and, after an unhappy spell in England, they travel to France, where their van breaks down in a picturesque village. Hassan's father decides that the family will settle in the village and open a new restaurant, but the site he chooses is just over the road from a Michelin-starred establishment serving classic French haute cuisine. Its proprietor, Madame Mallory, looks down on the new arrivals and subtly sabotages their efforts – though one of her sous-chefs, Marguerite, is friendly towards the Kadam family and lends Hassan books on French gastronomy.

Tensions rise as the Kadam family's restaurant thrives on the strength of Hassan's cooking. However, when Mallory's head chef paints xenophobic graffiti on the Kadam family's wall and sets fire to part of the restaurant, Mallory is horrified and sacks him. Needing a new chef, she takes on Hassan. He learns everything he can about French cuisine and, with his influence in the kitchen, Madame Mallory wins a second Michelin star. Hassan is headhunted by a top Parisian restaurant and becomes an internationally renowned chef. But, missing Marguerite and his family, he gives up his Parisian success and returns to Madame Mallory's, intent on winning a third Michelin star.

Ida

Poland/Denmark/France/United Kingdom 2013

Director: Pawel Pawlikowski

Certificate 12A 82m 12s



Out of the past: Agata Trzebuchowska

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

Set in an austere, almost abandoned Poland during the early 1960s, director Pawel Pawlikowski's first feature

made in his homeland is a spare, haunting piece of minimalism, opening in silence on a black-and-white close-up of a young novice, the broad planes of her face calling to mind a young Renée Jeanne Falconetti. But if this convent-set overture primes us to expect a meditation on faith in the style of Dreyer or Bresson, what we get is both far simpler and even more profound,

a still water that runs unspeakably deep.

Anna has been raised in the convent where she was abandoned as a baby. She has never known anywhere else. Now 18 and about to take her vows, she is ordered by her mother superior to visit Lodz, and the aunt whose existence was hitherto unknown to her. The woman she meets, Wanda, is hard-faced and hard-drinking, simmering with contempt for the world. She taunts Anna about her faith and reveals that she is in fact Jewish: "A Jewish nun," she snorts. Anna's real name, Wanda tells her, is Ida (pronounced Ee-da) and her parents were killed during WWII.

These revelations lead to a sad, small road

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Eric Abraham
Piotr Dzieciol
Ewa Puszczyńska

Screenplay
Rebecca Lenkiewicz
Directors of
Photography
Lukasz Zal
Ryszard Lenczewski

Editor
Jaroslaw Kaminski

Production Design
Katarzyna Sobanska
Marcel Slawinski
Original Music
Kristian Selin
Eidnes Andersen
Supervising
Sound Editor
Claus Lyngye
Costume Design
Aleksandra Staszko

Companies
Opus Film, Phoenix
Film in association
with Portobello
Pictures
Co-produced by
Canal+ Poland,
Phoenix Film Poland
Co-financed by
Polish Film Institute,
Eurimages, Danish
Film Institute,
City of Lodz
A film by Pawel

CAST
Agata Kulesza
Wanda Gruz
Agata
Trzebuchowska
Ida Lebenstein,
Sister Anna

Reviewed by
Catherine Wheatley

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Manish Dayal
Hassan Kadam
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Marguerite
Amit Shah
Mansur Kadam
Farzana Dua Elahe

Reviewed by
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Ewa Puszczyńska

Screenplay
Rebecca Lenkiewicz
Directors of
Photography
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Ryszard Lenczewski

Editor
Jaroslaw Kaminski

Production Design
Katarzyna Sobanska
Marcel Slawinski
Original Music
Kristian Selin
Eidnes Andersen
Supervising
Sound Editor
Claus Lyngye
Costume Design
Aleksandra Staszko

Companies
Opus Film, Phoenix
Film in association
with Portobello
Pictures
Co-produced by
Canal+ Poland,
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Co-financed by
Polish Film Institute,
Eurimages, Danish
Film Institute,
City of Lodz
A film by Pawel

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Stolen Kisses

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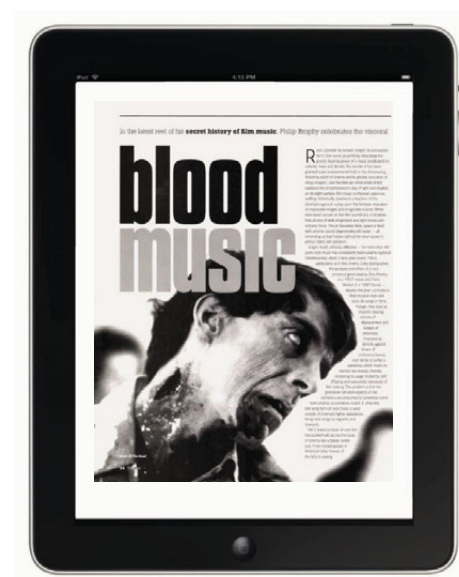
A Gorgeous Girl Like Me

A young sociologist specialising in female criminals travels to a prison to interview Camille who has been incarcerated for murdering her lover, husband and her father. He discovers Camille to have a surprising air of innocence and soon finds himself becoming enraptured by her charms. But all that glitters isn't gold – and sometimes it's actually cold, hard steel...

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trip through the bleak Polish countryside to find out what happened to Anna's parents. As the two women travel through ghostly villages and across shorn fields into the Stalinist architecture of Lodz and Szydlow, a history very delicately, almost silently, unfolds. The details are sparse, the narrative laconic to say the least. But we don't need to know the intricacies of Poland's political past to feel that there is something rotten in the air. Places are empty, people shift. *Ida* is shot in hard-focus black-and-white but leaves the impression that even in colour this land would seem pale, bled of life. This is a place where stained glass, usually such a source of illumination, is but an impenetrable collection of semi-opaque shapes.

Cinematographers Lukasz Zal and Ryszard Lenczewski's detailed, painterly style of shooting is balanced by their use of natural light, which casts their sets in shadows. Wanda and Anna are literally boxed in by the unusual 1.37:1 aspect ratio and static camera, overwhelmed by the spaces they inhabit and the weight of history. Impassive grey skies and bulky cement blocks dominate the screen, consigning the characters to its lower corners. (A special commendation should go to the film's UK subtitles for switching to surtitles when necessary to keep the images intact.) The bare, brutal *mise en scène* is all right angles and parallel lines: window frames, doorways, railings, even the trees are unusually upright, as if the landscape itself is trying desperately to impose order on chaos. And of course there are the cruciforms that hang on wall after wall, and which a prostrate Anna will eventually form with her own body.

Anna is the axis around which the film turns – indeed, her final flight from Lodz spurs the camera into its first movement. Her novice's robe lends her a subtle authority over the people she and Wanda encounter, who evoke God's name as a second-thought blessing at the sight of her. Newcomer Agata Trzebuchowska – whose glittering, unreadable eyes are almost black – is perfect in the role. But this is as much Agata Kulesza's film as Trzebuchowska's, and her performance as Wanda is simply breathtaking. Contorted from the effort of plugging the emotional dam with booze, sex, cigarettes and sharp lines, Wanda is an old-school *noir* broad, her shiny veneer constantly on the verge of cracking.

Anna's theme is a simple chorale prelude for piano by Bach; Wanda's is Mozart's magnificent Jupiter Symphony, full of drama, light and shade. Wanda is the embodiment of Poland's past hopes and disappointments, the self-destruction she wreaks on herself the damning evidence that, to paraphrase Terry Eagleton, European history turns on a tortured body. Anna is its legacy, and it's little wonder that her first response to the horrors she unveils is to preserve what innocence remains to her, sequestering herself away from the world, seeking refuge in her Catholic God. But this is ultimately not a film about finding salvation through belief, and at its end we can't be sure where Anna is going. Crafted with deceptive simplicity, riven with uncertainty, *Ida* has no answers to the questions it raises about how we protect ourselves and our loved ones from the burdens of the past, nor how we move forward. But its indelible images are a stark reminder of Bazin's dictum that film itself is a kind of miracle. **S**

The Inbetweeners 2

United Kingdom 2014
Directors: Damon Beesley, Iain Morris
Certificate 15 95m 47s

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Ma's out, Pa's out, let's make an astonishingly coarse sequel. Nerdy Will (Simon Bird) may be the narrator, but the tone for this fetid rubbish-heap of a movie is set by laddish Jay (James Buckley), who in an admittedly impressive travelling shot early on, setting the plot in motion, boasts to the camera of all the clunge, muff, minge, pussay etc he's been having on his gap year in Australia. Of course, Jay is a bullshitter and the sex-filled life he shows us is pure fantasy, as Will, Neil (Blake Harrison) and Simon (Joe Thomas) soon learn on their arrival in Sydney; but when Jay says that all the supermodels he's been banging secretly love anal sex, and a trio of young women exit with their hands over their arses, I'm *pretty* sure we're meant to be laughing *with* Jay, not? Jay doesn't exactly get his comeuppance; instead he is humiliated by his equally unpleasant uncle, who tells his friends about Jay's masturbatory habits and probably – one loses track of all the hilarious gay-bashing jokes – suggests that he's gay. Jay's uncle doesn't exactly get his comeuppance either. Anyway, that is what this highly profitable film, improbably praised in the broadsheets for its 'truthful' vision of life, is like.

There probably is a thin defence to be made of the characters' misogyny – they are idiots, many young men are just that horrid, it's exaggerated for notionally comic effect – but that argument would be fractionally less specious were the writers and directors Damon Beesley and Iain Morris not as culpable as their creations. There are two principal female roles in *The Inbetweeners 2*: posh backpacker Katie (Emily Berrington), Will's unrequited 'first love' from prep school, who is now inexplicably ready to requite, and Lucy (Tamla Kari), Simon's girlfriend, who is a recurring presence on Skype. Lucy is your classic clingy-girlfriend stereotype pushed to a psychotic extreme and without a single redeeming feature: abusive except after Simon accidentally asks for her hand in marriage, when she becomes hysterically happy. There is a recurring 'joke' of her destroying Simon's property for no reason; and all the jokes, such as they are, are at her expense. At the end, as if we didn't get the hint



Unlikely lads: Bird, Buckley, Harrison, Thomas

that she was a piece of work, Lucy turns out to have been cheating on Simon all along.

Berrington's thankless role mostly involves simpering; but having spent most of the film giving Will far more attention than he deserves, Katie too is unmasked as unworthy, giving Will the opportunity to make a vitriolic and entirely predictable speech about overprivileged backpackers. Class distinctions were one of the mainsprings of the original *Inbetweeners* sitcom: Will was a social outcast at school, and even among the four main characters, on account of his prematurely aborted private education. Here those distinctions are less explicit but much more crude. The hierarchy of class is also a hierarchy of intelligence, from the now essentially braindead Neil upwards, and many of the jokes involve students Will and Simon rolling their eyes at the idiocies of non-students Neil and Jay. At the same time, everyone has enough money not only to fly to Australia on a whim but at the end of the film to go on to Vietnam: class is reduced to identity. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Spencer Millman
Written by
Damon Beesley
Iain Morris
Director of Photography
Ben Wheeler
Editor
William Webb
Production Designer
Richard Bullock
Original Music
David Arnold
Michael Price
Production Sound Mixer
Bob Newton
Costume Designer
Claire Finlay-Thompson

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Four Television
Corporation and
Bwark Productions

Limited Production Companies
Film4 presents in association with
Zodiak Media a
Bwark film
A Bwark production for Film4 and
Zodiak Media
Executive Producers
Caroline Leddy
Phil Clarke
Tessa Ross
Tracey Josephs
Mark Lesbirel
Leo Martin
Damon Beesley
Iain Morris

CAST

Simon Bird
Will MacKenzie
James Buckley
Jay Cartwright

Blake Harrison
Neil Sutherland
Joe Thomas
Simon Cooper
Emily Berrington
Katie Evans
Freddie Stroma
Ben Thornton-Wild
David Field
Uncle Bryan
Belinda Stewart-Wilson
Polly MacKenzie
Tamla Kari
Lucy
Lydia Rose Bewley
Jane

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Entertainment Film
Distributors Ltd

Bristol, the present. Undergraduate Will is visited by schoolfriends Simon and Neil. Will is extremely unpopular at university, and Simon wants to escape from his girlfriend Lucy. After receiving an email from their friend Jay boasting of his gap-year sex life in Australia, they decide to fly out. On arrival in Sydney, Will bumps into an old crush, Katie, who invites them to go travelling with her. Will persuades the group to accept, though none of them fits in with Katie's rich backpacker companions. Meanwhile Simon, while attempting to break up with Lucy via Skype, instead proposes marriage, which she accepts.

After a disastrous visit to a water park, Will separates from the group. While they drive into the outback to find Jay's ex-girlfriend Jane – the real reason he is in Australia – Will tries his luck with Katie. He is soon disillusioned and follows the other three by plane. They run out of petrol in the middle of a desert and narrowly escape death. Jane turns Jay down. Lucy admits she has been cheating on Simon, much to Simon's relief. To Will's horror, his mother arrives with her new beau, Will's old headmaster. The friends travel on to Vietnam.

In Order of Disappearance

Norway/Denmark/Sweden/Germany 2014

Director: Hans Petter Moland

Certificate 15 116m 39s

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Hans Petter Moland's follow-up to *A Somewhat Gentle Man* (2010) again finds the Norwegian director teaming up with Swedish actor Stellan Skarsgård in a mordant, crime-infused comedy-thriller. Skarsgård, in hulking hangdog mode, plays Nils Dickman, a Swedish snowplough driver working in Norway. Nils is awarded a 'Person of the Year' award for services to his profession at the film's outset, but he's not in a happy place. His work is his life and his distant wife barely speaks to him; matters are compounded when his son is slain by members of a Norwegian gang in a bungled drug deal. His son's murderers spread the word that the death came from an overdose – a slander that the boy's mother is only too ready to believe. The distraught Dickman jams a shotgun into his mouth, when a fateful intervention from one of his son's friends confirms the truth about the incident. This revelation gives Dickman a purpose: to make like his snowplough (as a none too subtle visual metaphor repeatedly reminds us) and run a clean line through the men responsible.

As is commonplace in the revenge-movie canon, from *Death Wish* (1974) to *Django Unchained* (2012), the avenger's first kill prefigures a bloodlust that's conflated with a fierce moral righteousness. Nils's early outbursts are guiltily fun to behold, given the imposing Skarsgård's mastery of the gruffly quiet eruption. However, Moland refrains from developing or interrogating his character in any meaningful way. His film instead devolves into a tonally glib, extremely violent and narratively convoluted jumble involving warring Norwegian and Serbian gangs, while Nils, disappointingly, all but disappears into the background. The chiselled, lanky Pål Sverre Hagen is plenty of fun as preening, ponytailed Scandi-supervillain Greven, but he



Ploughman's hunch: Stellan Skarsgård

fails to convey the necessary level of menace to inject the film with dramatic suspense.

In Order of Disappearance groans under the weight of its evident influences. The discursive dialogue among criminals, as popularised by Quentin Tarantino in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994), is aped here with diminishing returns; and the vast, snowy landscapes (though admirably captured by cinematographer Philip Øgaard) can't help but conjure up memories of the Coen brothers' vastly superior *Fargo* (1996) — there's even a bizarre scene near the end involving the unconventional use of a wood chipper.

The film's Norwegian title is *Kraftidioten* – 'The Prize Idiot' – and that moniker could be applied to almost anyone here. Yet beyond a general suggestion that his characters are morons, Moland's approach lacks a discernible critical edge. Despite a couple of intriguing themes being broached (troubled father-son relationships, the role of the immigrant in contemporary Norway), the film seems comfortable instead to glory in its baggy flippancy. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Stein B. Kvæ
Finn Gjerdrum

Screenplay

Kim Fupz Aakeson
Based on a story by
Hans Petter Moland,
Kim Fupz Aakeson,
Finn Gjerdrum

Director of Photography

Philip Øgaard

Editor

Jens Christian
Fodstad

Production Designer

Jørgen Stangebye
Larsen

Composers

Kaspar Kaae

Sound

Gisele Tveito

Costume Designer

Anne Pedersen

Companies

Paradox Film 2
AS, Nordisk Film
AS, Zentropa
Entertainments5
ApS, Zentropa
International
Sweden AB
Production
Companies
A film by Hans
Petter Moland
Paradox Film 2 AS

in co-production
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AS, Zentropa
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ApS, Zentropa
International Sweden
AB, Film i Väst, Film 3
With support from
Norsk Filmintitutt,
Eurimages,
Nordisk Film &
TV Fond, Danske
Filmintitutt, Svenska
Filmintitutt, Film
3, Storyline Studios
AS, Film i Väst
With the financial
participation of
Zengarde, Stellan
Skarsgård, Inspirator

Investment Network
AS, Kittliffall AS, Hans
Petter Moland
In collaboration with
TV2, DR/Filmklubben,
Neue Visionen
Supported by
Eurimages
With the development
and i2i support of the
MEDIA Programme
of the EU
Executive Producers
Peter Garde
Lone Korslund
Hans Petter Moland
Stellan Skarsgård
Stein B. Kvæ
Finn Gjerdrum
Erik Poppe

CAST

Stellan Skarsgård
Nils Dickman
Bruno Ganz
Papa
Pål Sverre Hagen
The Count
Jakob Oftebro
Aron Horowitz
Brigitte Hjort
Sørensen
Marit
Kristoffer Hivju
Strike
Anders Baasmo
Christiansen
Geir
Peter Andersson
Wingman

Gard B. Eidsvold
Halldor Emanuel
Jon Øigarden
Karsten

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Metrodome
Distribution Ltd

Norwegian
theatrical title
Kraftidioten

The present. Nils Dickman, a Swedish snowplough driver working in Norway, discovers that his son Ingvar has died, apparently of a drug overdose. Nils doesn't believe the rumour but, depressed, decides to kill himself. Before he can pull the trigger, however, a friend of Ingvar's reveals the truth: Ingvar was murdered by local criminals in a bungled drug deal. Nils sets out to track down those responsible, and kills three men working for Norwegian drug kingpin Greven. Greven, suspecting that a rival Serbian gang is behind the killings, murders the son of the Serbs' head man Papa and publicly displays his corpse, sparking a turf war.

Nils visits his brother Wingman, an ex-criminal, and asks him to recommend a hitman to kill Greven. Nils hires 'The Chinaman'. When the Chinaman visits

Greven, however, he offers to sell Nils's identity. Appalled at the hitman's disloyalty, Greven murders him, but not before learning the surname of the man who has hired him: Dickman. Greven assumes Wingman is responsible; in order to save his brother, Wingman confesses, sacrificing himself. The Serbs target Greven's young son, and stake out his school, but Nils kidnaps the boy and hides him in his cabin. He attempts to orchestrate a fatal meeting between the Serbian and Norwegian gangs at a local ski resort but is foiled by an unwitting school janitor, who tips Greven off about Nils's whereabouts. The Serbs arrive at Nils's place shortly after the Norwegians and a gunfight ensues. Everyone, apart from the boy, Nils and Papa, is killed. Nils and Papa drive away.

Into the Storm

USA 2014

Director: Steven Quale

Certificate 12A 89m 8s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

This conventional disaster movie is an essay in the mock-documentary form, with characters having various excuses for toting cameras into peril – a professional film crew, school kids recording a graduation or an application for an internship, comic daredevils hoping for YouTube hits by throwing themselves into danger. Whereas most POV films try for improv-sounding chatter, this has non-stop cliché talk, with platitudes about family and togetherness spouted in between the admittedly spectacular devastation.

Aside from the hapless cameraman swept up by a fiery tornado, this doesn't seem overly informed by director Steven Quale's earlier work on a *Final Destination* sequel. However, echoes of his long association as a second unit director for James Cameron might inform the characterisation of the filmmaker who obsessively chases the money shots at the cost of lives and relationships but turns out all right in the end. Otherwise, this is one of the most life-affirming disaster films ever made, with nary a looter or kill-crazy national guardsman in sight (and surprisingly few onscreen casualties) and the ultimate message that tornadoes bring families back together.

For about half the time, *Into the Storm's* mix of earnestness and idiocy is entertaining, and it's certainly less cynical than the *Sharknado* films, but the sense of holding back hampers its potential for endearing hokum status. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Todd Garner

Written by

John Swetnam

Director of Photography

Brian Pearson

Edited by

Eric Sears

Production Designer

David R. Sandefur

Music Composed and Conducted by

Brian Tyler

Sound Mixer

Geoffrey Patterson

Costumes

Designed by

Kimberly Adams

Stunt Co-ordinators

Scott Workman

Visual Effects

Method Studios

[Hy*drau*lx]

Digital Domain

MPC

Scanline VFX

Cinesite

Prime Focus

Svengali Visual

Effects

©Warner Bros.

Entertainment

Inc. (U.S., Canada,

Bahamas &

Bermuda)

©Village Roadshow

Films (BVI) Limited

(all other territories)

Production Companies

New Line Cinema

presents in

association with

Village Roadshow

Pictures a Broken

Road production

In association

with Ratpac-Dune

Entertainment

Executive Producers

Bruce Berman

Walter Hamada

Mark McNair

Dave Neustadter

Richard Brenner

Jeremy Stein

CAST

Richard Armitage

Gary Fuller

Sarah Wayne

Callies

Dr Allison Stone

Matt Walsh

Pete Moore

Max Deacon

Donnie Fuller

Nathan Kress

Trey Fuller

Alycia Debnam-Carey

Kaitlyn Johnston

Arien Escarpeta

Daryl Kerley

Jeremy Sumpter

Jacob Hodges

Lee Whittaker

Lucas Guerrette

Kyle Davis

Donk

Jon Reep

Reavis

Scott Lawrence

Principal Thomas

Walker

Dolby Digital/ Datasat In Colour Prints by Technicolor [1.85:1]

Distributor

Warner Bros

Distributors (UK)

US, present day. An unprecedented tornado system converges on the small town of Silverton. Documentarian Pete Moore leads a team, including meteorologist Allison Stone, into jeopardy to capture footage of the extreme weather event. Teacher Gary Fuller and his younger son Trey ride along with Moore's crew to a collapsed factory, where Gary rescues his other son Donnie and classmate Kaitlyn. Though Allison criticises Moore for his ruthlessness after a cameraman dies trying to get a shot for his film, the director sacrifices himself to save the others, and is sucked up into a twister.

I Origins

USA 2014
Director: Mike Cahill
Certificate 15 105m 42s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Before – and even after – he hit on the populist *Twilight Zone* framework of *The Sixth Sense* (1999), M. Night Shyamalan was inclined to make films like *I Origins*, the second feature from writer-director-producer-editor Mike Cahill. More an exercise in spiritual rumination than a mystery, Cahill's follow-up to *Another Earth* (2011) is earnest yet intermittently affecting, adding to a slim catalogue of serious films about reincarnation that includes Robert Wise's *Audrey Rose* (1977) and Bernardo Bertolucci's *Little Buddha* (1993). Like Shyamalan, Cahill is good at filming quiet yet earth-shattering dialogue exchanges and staging horrific events – here, an *Omen*-like accident in a rickety lift – which weigh deep-thinking protagonists down with grief and push them towards an epiphany or revelation. Although it's positioned as an indie art-relationships movie rather than a genre picture, *I Origins* even has a last-reel twist, delivered in cinema's traditional enlightenment territory of India.

An anecdote about the Dalai Lama admitting that he would change his beliefs if scientific counterproof were presented to him is used to challenge the sceptical, Dawkins-reading worldview of researcher Ian Gray (Michael Pitt). It's hard not to feel that the really radical course would be to make a film about a person of faith who comes to embrace science, rather than the other way around. Gray admits that he has chosen his field of study (the human eye) because it is often used as evidence to support intelligent design, and his powerful commitment to scientific method sounds more credible than girlfriend Sofi's vague, non-denominational beliefs. With her (real) multicoloured irises, Astrid Bergès-Frisbey is an intriguing muse – Sofi appears at first in a stocking mask with eyeholes, and walks out on Ian after a brief encounter in a bathroom during a party, then is found and proves to be entrancing yet spacey. When Ian and his assistant Karen (Brit Marling) have a genuine breakthrough in their research, Sofi only thinks of it as torturing worms.



The eyes have it: Michael Pitt, Brit Marling

Even her death in the elevator is at least partially her fault, and in a credible, powerful moment, Ian admits that just before the accident he was terrified he might get stuck with “this child” for the rest of his life. This sets up a development in which he is married to his genuine intellectual partner but perhaps adoptive father to a new incarnation of his soulmate, a literal child.

Just as *Another Earth* wilfully ignored astrophysics to frame a quirky relationships drama, this hints at huge things it doesn't engage with. Not only is a government project chasing the secret of reincarnation, but the whole retinal recognition industry (in which a secondary character is heavily invested) is likely to collapse if matches through reincarnation are as commonplace as the plot suggests. That's without even touching on the bizarre triangular relationship Ian might have with the two or three women in his life if the implications of the finale are followed through. Sofi reacts to Ian's work with a cry that man shouldn't play God, which goes all the way back to *Frankenstein*, but Cahill is balanced enough as a writer to suggest she's being unfair to the genuinely open-minded Ian – who has noted numerical patterns in his life that suggest a magician working the strings of reality.

Cahill's films are deceptively quiet, deeply felt and interestingly demented. Even when ideas threaten to go off the rails, the direction is inventive and the performances are pitched perfectly. **B**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Mike Cahill
Hunter Gray
Alex Orlovsky

Written by

Mike Cahill
Director of Photography

Markus Förderer

Editor

Mike Cahill

Production Designer

Tania Bijlani

Music

Will Bates
Phil Mossman

Sound Mixer

Kyle Porter

Costume Designer

Megan Gray

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Fox Film Corporation

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LLC (in all territories

except Brazil,

Italy, Japan, Korea

and Spain)

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Corporation and

White Peacock LLC

(in Brazil, Italy, Japan,

Korea and Spain)

Production

Companies

Fox Searchlight

Pictures presents

a Verisimilitude/

WeWork Studios

production in

association with

Bersin Pictures and

Penny Jane Films

Supported by the

Sundance Institute/

Ray and Dagmar

Dolby Family Fund

Executive Producers

Adam Neumann

Rebekah Paltrow

Neumann

Bonnie Timmermann

Adam S. Bersin

Jayne Hong

Tyler Brodie

Burton Gray

Michael Pitt

CAST

Michael Pitt

Dr Ian Gray

Brit Marling

Karen

Astrid Bergès-

Frisbey

Sofi

Steven Yeun

Kenry

Archie Panjabi

Priya Varma

Cara Seymour

Dr Simmons

Venida Evans

Margaret Dairy

William Mapother

Darryl Mackenzie

Kashish

Salomina

Dolby Atmos/

Datasat/SDDS

In Colour

[2.39:1]

Distributor

20th Century Fox

International (UK)

New York, the recent past. At a party, Ian Gray, a scientist studying the human eye, has a sexual encounter with Sofi, a masked woman with distinctive eyes. Seeing her eyes on a billboard, he later tracks her down. They begin a relationship, though her spirituality clashes with his scepticism. Sofi is killed in a freak elevator accident.

Seven years later, Ian is married to Karen, his research assistant, and they have a young son,

Tobias. Tobias is examined by Dr Simmons, a shadowy researcher, on the pretext that he might be autistic. Ian learns that his son shares a retinal pattern with a recently dead man, which Simmons believes might be a sign of reincarnation. Checking Sofi's retinal scan, Ian finds a match in Salomina, an orphan in Delhi. Locating the child, he tests to see if she has any of Sofi's latent memories. The test is inconclusive but Salomina is unaccountably terrified of entering a hotel lift.

The Last Impresario

Australia 2013
Director: Gracie Otto

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

As a young theatre producer in 1960s London, Michael White had a feel for zeitgeisty content that caused the right kind of controversy and sometimes also pulled in serious crowds. His first West End show was Jack Gelber's drug drama *The Connection*; he also troubled the Lord Chamberlain's Office with *Son of Oblomov*, *Oh! Calcutta!* and *The Rocky Horror Show*, and arguably altered British comedy history for good by giving the Cambridge Footlights its first mainstream theatre exposure. He worked too with visual and dance artists including Yoko Ono, Merce Cunningham and Pina Bausch, and befriended everyone who was anyone in the course of a life that heavily prioritised parties – a “mini-Diaghilev of the permissive society”, theatre critic Michael Billington calls him in the course of this bouncy account of his life and times.

The range of celebrity talking heads that director Gracie Otto has assembled to talk about White is extensive, and includes some elusive characters, although they don't necessarily have a lot to say – Anna Wintour mostly wants to praise him for being the first to tell her about Kate Moss, while Moss herself is agog at his “amazing” capacity to stay up all night partying. The film is quick, informative and buoyant, but it does go in a bit for repetitive luvvie-darling praise of its subject over analysis of what makes him tick artistically or what really lies behind his urge to befriend the well known. The notion that the rich and famous are inherently fascinating is taken rather at face value – one old friend gushes about meeting, through White, “the most extraordinary people of our time – actors, songwriters, royalty!” – and an awful lot of montages of White in the company of random celebrities gives the film something of the feel of one of those party scrapbooks from *Vanity Fair* magazine. A scene in which White flicks through his voluminous photograph albums identifying celebrities – “Neil Simon... Princess Margaret... Sean Connery... Michael Caine... Johnny Depp...” – doesn't so much emphasise how impressively connected he is as what a peculiar mess of individuals get grouped together when fame is the sole criterion for inclusion.

Whether White himself truly admires all the people he has amassed goes largely uninterrogated, although his ex-wife and sister do briefly muse towards the film's end about the extent to which a lonely childhood plagued by ill health left him in need of constant company and distraction. White himself gives little away, partly because a series of strokes has left his communication compromised, and partly because he seems distinctly ambivalent about Otto's project, especially when she tries to dig into emotional and financial detail. Otto perhaps gives up a little too easily when he shuts her down, so that significant information is allowed to float away. That White gained custody of his three children after his first divorce is acknowledged as unusual, but the circumstances are not explained; just how he managed to lose his stake in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* shortly before it made millions remains obscure; his falling-out with friend Barry Humphries over some mishandled Dame Edna business is half-explored and then left

Let's Be Cops

USA 2014

Director: Luke Greenfield

Certificate 15 104m 20s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Let's not, shall we? Exactly 100 per cent of the laughs that I managed to wring out of *Let's Be Cops* came outside the New York City cinema where I'd watched it in deathly silence, from the questionable pleasure of riffing on its title in various online forums. I was particularly proud of *Let's Be Coprophagists*, though it was another bit of punnery that seemed to best capture the tenor of attitudes in the US in the week when Luke Greenfield's impersonating-an-officer comedy was released: *Let's Beat Cops*.

Before the world learnt the name of Eric Garner, the 43-year-old father who died in a chokehold administered by NYPD batons, or Michael Brown, an unarmed teenager who was shot and killed by police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri, a few weeks later, *Let's Be Cops* was destined to be but another police-themed action-comedy, like the *Ride Along* or *Jump Street* films, or *The Heat*, or... Dear God, why are there so many of these anyways?

Fortunately for *Cops* co-stars Jake Johnson and Damon Wayans Jr, they've hung on to their day jobs on Fox sitcom *New Girl*. Here, as in that unexceptionally lousy programme, they play roommates: Ryan and Justin are two 30-year-olds who moved to Los Angeles from Ohio after college, and have failed entirely to make anything of themselves in the years since. Ryan is an ex-quarterback who's been living off the money he made appearing in a commercial for herpes medication three years ago, while Justin is a talented videogame designer hamstrung by an inability to assert himself in either his professional or romantic life. Justin is black and circumspect, two facts that are not unrelated. "I can't play it cool, I'm black," he says when he and Ryan, out masquerading as patrolmen and abusing the privileges that come with their misappropriated badges, have to bluff their way



Fake fuzz: Damon Wayans Jr, Jake Johnson

past some actual officers. Ryan is the feckless degenerate of the duo, but he is able to play it cool and so, to date, to get away with everything. (This would be because he is white, although the movie does not see fit to address that fact.) "Isn't that the guy who took a shit on our doorstep?" a neighbour says of Ryan, when they see him passing in a police cruiser. "I've smoked crystal meth 111 times," Ryan later mentions to Justin, though he says he only smoked crack once. I guess this might explain the doorstep incident.

The blame for this mournful affair, a veritable faecal deposit upon the multiplex doorstep, rests squarely on the shoulders of Greenfield, who as director/co-producer/co-writer has presumably made exactly the movie he wanted to make. What he wanted to make is incredibly lazy. How lazy? So lazy that it opens with an aerial view of Los Angeles and Backstreet Boys' 'I Want It That Way' on the soundtrack, because how hilarious were the 90s, right? For further pop-culture recognition, the script is spritzed with namechecks to popular cop flicks, among them the *Lethal Weapon* movies with Danny Glover's "I'm getting too old for this shit" – which you would hope is true for every one of us at this point. ☹



Starred up: Michael White

vague. That he remains, as his ex-wife puts it, "the most hidden man you'll ever meet" is partly down to his own opacity, and partly to the priorities of a film that primarily wants to grab some reflected glory from all the cool famous people he knows. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Nicole O'Donohue
Written by
Gracie Otto
Director of Photography
Gracie Otto
Editor
Karen Johnson
Original Music
Michael Yezerksi
Sound Design
Lawrence Horne

Mel Flanagan
Film Extracts
Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1974)
My Dinner with André (1981)

WITH

Michael White
Naomi Watts
Anna Wintour
Kate Moss
Jean Pigozzi
Gracie Otto
Greta Scacchi
Miranda Darling
Yoko Ono
Wallace Shawn
Barry Humphries
Julian Sands
John Cleese
Rachel Ward
John Waters
Barnaby Thompson
Jeremy Thomas
André Gregory
Colin Vaines
Sarah White
Joshua White
Jim Sharman
Michael Billington
Bill Oddie
Rupert Lycett
Green
Candida Lycett
Green

Jean-Jacques Lebel
Erró
Michael Morris
Meryl Tankard
Alan Finkelstein
Alan Yentob
Harry Fane
Robert Fox
Tracy Tynan
Lyndall Hobbs
Gael Boggione
Nell Campbell
Sabrina Guinness
Richard O'Brien
Patricia Quinn
Brian Thomson
Lou Adler
Liberty White
Gabriel Heaton
Miriam Haley
Robert Shaye
Peter Richardson
Nigel Planer
Joanne Benjamin
Lorne Michaels
Jessica de Rothschild
Leonie Van Ness
Victor Santa-Ana

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Dogwoof

Cannes, 2010. Attending the opening night of the film festival, director Gracie Otto is intrigued by a well-connected, elderly guest. He is Michael White; her film is a documentary on his life as a theatre-maker and friend of the stars.

Born in Glasgow in 1936 but sent away to school in Switzerland, the young White travelled widely, acquiring multiple languages and a skill for socialising. Working for the White Barn Theatre in Connecticut drew him into theatre, and on moving to London in the early 1960s he began producing shows, demonstrating a particular flair for turning edgy material into box-office successes. White also worked with visual artists, dance companies and filmmakers, and befriended the international glitterati. However, financial and personal disappointments followed: he relinquished his stake in 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show' before it became a vastly profitable film, and fell out with friend Barry Humphries after the first staging of the Dame Edna Everage act flopped.

Now in poor health after a number of strokes, White lives in London; he has a vast archive of letters and photographs, some of which he is seen auctioning off through Sotheby's.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Simon Kinberg
Luke Greenfield
Written by
Luke Greenfield
Nicholas Thomas
Director of Photography
Daryn Okada
Editors
Jonathan Schwartz
Bill Pankow
Production Designer
William Arnold
Music
Christophe Beck
Jake Monaco
Supervising Sound Editor/Re-Recording Mixer

Lew Goldstein
Costume Designer
Debra McGuire

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Brazil, Italy, Korea, Japan and Spain)
Production Companies
A Luke Greenfield/Kinberg Genre production
A Luke Greenfield film
Made in association with TSG Entertainment
Made with assistance from the Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office, a division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development
This production

participated in the New York State Governor's Office for Motion Picture & Television Development's Post Production Credit Program
With the participation of the Province of British Columbia
Production Services Tax Credit
Executive Producers
Nicholas Thomas
Aditya Sood
Jeremiah Samuels

CAST

Jake Johnson
Ryan O'Malley
Damon Wayans Jr
Justin Miller
Rob Riggle
Officer Segars
Nina Dobrev
Josie
James D'Arcy
Mossi
Keegan-Michael Key
Pupa
Andy Garcia
Detective Brolin
Jon Lajoie
Todd Cutter
Tom Mardirosian
Georgie

Dolby Digital/Datasat In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
20th Century Fox International (UK)

Los Angeles, present day. Justin and Ryan are 30-year-old roommates who moved to LA after college and have failed to make anything of themselves since. Videogame programmer Justin still hasn't sold the police-based game that he's designed, and ex-quarterback Ryan spends his days reliving his former sporting glory. Attending a fancy-dress class reunion, they wear the patrolman costumes that Justin had planned to use for his videogame presentation. Walking the streets in the uniforms afterwards, they are astonished to find that, dressed as policemen, they induce desire in women and respect in men. Ryan later buys a used

police car so that they can continue to impersonate officers, and even persuades Justin to do some real police work, tackling Russian mobsters who are attempting to take over a local restaurant. Justin has a crush on one of the waitresses, Josie, who responds favourably to his new hero-cop guise. The ongoing ruse reaches a crisis point when Mossi, leader of the Russian mobsters, targets the interfering officers. Unmasked and dishonoured, they lead a real officer, Segars, into Kasic's headquarters and help to foil his sinister plans.

Later, Ryan enlists in the police force, while Justin's game goes into development.

Life of Crime

USA/United Arab Emirates 2013
Director: Daniel Schechter

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

Published in 1978, Elmore Leonard's *The Switch* pivots around a simple but mordantly funny premise: a woman is kidnapped but her husband isn't overly bothered about her safe return. For career criminals Ordell Robbie and Louis Gara – last seen on screen played respectively by Samuel L. Jackson and Robert De Niro in *Jackie Brown*, Quentin Tarantino's 1997 adaptation of Leonard's *Rum Punch* – this turns a seemingly foolproof big score into a big flop. Leonard, of course, was a master of writing himself out of corners, and this initial brick wall is the catalyst for plenty of the author's tortuous motifs – double crosses, shady business dealings, unlikely romance – to come into play, as the story snakes its way to an abrupt cymbal-crash of a punchline. Blandly retitled *Life of Crime*, writer-director Daniel Schechter's breezy adaptation is tight, lean and markedly faithful to the rhythm of Leonard's prose, even as its frothy texture dissipates quickly in the memory.

Introduced grinning and bearing it at a gruesomely beige country-club bash, swamped by stiffies and phoneys, nominal protagonist Mickey Dawson (Jennifer Aniston) could do with a change. A stifled trophy wife, Mickey is routinely belittled by husband Frank (Tim Robbins, splendidly slimy), a crass blowhard who's made millions from crooked property deals. One undignified situation replaces another for Mickey when Ordell (Yasiin Bey, aka Mos Def) and Louis (John Hawkes) plan to extort a million dollars from Frank by holding her for ransom. But both kidnappers and prisoner are unaware that Frank has filed for divorce and plans to run off to the Bahamas with his mistress (Isla Fisher). The kidnappers' bluff is called, while Frank realises that if Mickey happened to be bumped off, he'd avoid paying alimony.

Through all this, Schechter's mode of deadpan catastrophe recalls the Coens at their broadest: Mark Boone Jr's shambling white supremacist character, owner of the safe house where Mickey is installed, might well have been dreamt up by the brothers. The kidnapping itself is a wittily staged piece of farce, with Mickey's drippy admirer (Will Forte) obviously showing up at the worst



Seems like old crimes: Jennifer Aniston

possible moment to prepare an elaborate seduction – martinis, soft music etc – only to be knocked cold by the bumbling intruders hiding upstairs. The film sometimes comes perilously close to overdosing on period kitsch, with crash zooms aplenty, a funk-inflected soundtrack that echoes David Holmes's work on Steven Soderbergh's *Out of Sight* (1998) and gleefully lurid art direction (Frank's eye-wateringly garish Bahamas bolthole is a particular standout). But Schechter capably turns down the temperature when required, creating one or two moments of genuine tension where the easy jocularity turns deadly serious.

In her progression from put-upon 'tennis mom' to table-turning avenger, Mickey is a typically layered Leonard woman to rank alongside Jackie Brown, *Out of Sight*'s Karen Sisco and *Cat Chase*'s Mary DeBoya. But although Aniston is fine, the character never seems to register fully, only acquiring real agency late in proceedings. Bey's Ordell is less aggressive than Jackson's prior incarnation, although his smirking insouciance masks an equally cold-blooded core, while Hawkes offers a charismatic turn as the raffish, ultimately soft-centred Louis – a stark contrast to the dim-witted thug inhabited by De Niro. It's an impressive ensemble that elevates what threatens occasionally to be an insufferably glib affair. But while the movie often seems featherweight, its tart flavour and brusque approach make it one of the more authentic stabs at Leonard in recent years. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Ashok Amritraj
Michael Siegel
Liz Destro
Jordan Kessler
Ellen Goldsmith-Vein
Lee Stollman
Written for the Screen by
Daniel Schechter
Based on the book *The Switch* written by Elmore Leonard
Director of Photography
Eric Edwards

Editor
Daniel Schechter
Production Designer
Ibhal Weinberg
Original Score
The Newton Brothers
Sound Mixer
Tod Maitland
Costume Designer
Anna Terrazas

@Tuelp
Investments, LLC
Production Companies
Hyde Park

Entertainment presents with Starstream
Entertainment in association with Image Nation, Abolita Productions and Ladove Films a Gotham Group, Ashok Amritraj production in association with Atlantic Pictures, Christopher Marsh and Darren Goldberg
Executive Producers
Elmore Leonard

Jennifer Aniston
Aleen Keshishian
Charles Bonan
Kim Leadford
Tim Nye
Christopher Herghelegiu
Larry Ladove
James Garavente
Jacob Pechenik

CAST
Jennifer Aniston
Mickey Dawson
yasiin bey

[i.e. Mos Def]
Ordell Robbie
Isla Fisher
Melanie
Will Forte
Marshall Taylor
Mark Boone Jr
Richard Monk
Tim Robbins
Frank Dawson
John Hawkes
Louis Gara
Tyra Taylor
Clea Lewis
Charlie Tahan
Bo Dawson

Kevin Corrigan
Ray

Dolby Digital
In Colour
Colour by
Nice Dissolve
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Curzon Film World

Detroit, 1978. Small-time crooks Ordell Robbie and Louis Gara kidnap Mickey Dawson, demanding a ransom of a million dollars from her husband, property tycoon Frank. However, the kidnappers and Mickey are unaware that Frank has already filed for divorce, intending to elope with his Bahamas-based mistress Melanie. Melanie convinces Frank to defy the kidnappers' demands and let them kill Mickey – that way, he'll avoid having to pay alimony. Ordell threatens

Melanie, who says that Frank will pay him \$100,000 to get rid of Mickey. Ordell accepts, ordering accomplice Richard to carry out the hit, but doesn't tell Louis. Louis saves Mickey from Richard, who is later shot by police. Louis lets Mickey go home, where she informs Frank that she knows about his crooked property deals and is prepared to indict him if necessary. Mickey joins forces with a reunited Louis and Ordell to kidnap Melanie, confident that Frank will pay this time.

Lucy

France/USA 2014
Director: Luc Besson
Certificate 15 89m 22s

Reviewed by Violet Lucca

After the release of *Lucy*, it's unclear which dumb myth will become even more widespread: that we only use 10 per cent of our brains, or that we must suspend disbelief while watching movies. So wilfully, gleefully stupid in every respect, this is truly the film for an age where misinformation abounds thanks to super PACs, clickbait 'articles' and smarmy image macros.

But like all things that are bad for you, this tastes really, really good. In Luc Besson's capable, shameless hands, an outlandish premise – a drug can unlock more brainpower, which allows you to do a bunch of supernatural stuff – is paired with bombastic, absurd visuals: nature footage of a leopard hunting a gazelle is intercut with Lucy (Scarlett Johansson, wearing a leopard-print jacket from the night before) attempting to outrun some Korean gangsters; any mention of 'human achievement' is immediately followed by a high-speed montage of cities, robots and dancers from around the world; when she reaches 40 per cent brain capacity, Lucy can change her hair and clothing to elude airport security. Aside from its great comic effect, Besson's aesthetic makes the film an engaging, surprising visual spectacle in a way that most action movies simply aren't any more. Realistic explosions, kung fu and slow-motion snowboarding stunts off mountaintops now routinely appear in television commercials for toothpaste; what was once breathtakingly reserved for feature films is part of our videogames and everyday visual landscape. *Lucy*'s formal outlandishness makes it distinctive from either.

The way in which the film's 'action' – be it knife fights or high-speed chases – is parcelled out is also a little different. As Lucy is able to access more of her brain, her focus declines: at the film's climax, as a gang led by Oldboy himself (Choi Min-sik, again refusing to act in English) uses shotguns and rocket launchers against the Parisian police department, Lucy, almost at 100 per cent brains, merely sits in a chair, attempting to download all her knowledge into a supercomputer to benefit mankind. (She does, however, also travel through time in her mind, encountering the Native Americans who lived on Manhattan and Lucy, the first humanoid; she also gets to witness the Big Bang, which is



Know it all: Scarlett Johansson

Magic in the Moonlight

Director: Woody Allen
Certificate 12A 97m 35s

rendered in throbbing blue-tinted CGI.) A few scenes before, while at the seemingly superior 80 per cent brains, Lucy pins some gangsters to the ceiling with an invisible force instead of fighting them – it's not worth her time, nor ours, as we've seen all this before. Bolstered by Johansson's wide-eyed performance, which drolly goes between fear, rage and enlightenment, *Lucy* is the best use of pseudoscience outside of an episode of *Ancient Aliens*. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Virginie Besson-Silla
Written by Luc Besson
Director of Photography Thierry Arbogast
Editor Julien Rey
Production Designer Hugues Tissandier
Original Score Eric Serra
Sound Guillaume Bouchateau
Stephane Bucher
Didier Lozahic
Shannon Mills
David Parker
Costume Designer Olivier Beriot
Visual Effects Industrial Light & Magic
Rodeo FX
Digital Factory
Savage Visual Effects
Make Inc.
Stunt Co-ordinator Laurent Demianoff

in co-production with TF1 Films Productions with the participation of Canal+, Ciné+ and TF1
Executive Producer Marc Shmuger
Film Extracts *Bovines ou la vraie vie des vaches* (2012)
Home (2009)
Atlantis (1991)
Le Premier Cri (2007)
Baraka (1992)
Samsara (2011)
Le Syndrome du Titanic (2008)
Les Animaux amoureux (2007)
The Mad Magician (1954)

CAST
Scarlett Johansson Lucy
Morgan Freeman Professor Samuel Norman
Choi Min-sik Mr Jang
Amr Waked Pierre Del Rio
Julian Rhind-Tutt The Limey
Pilou Asbæk Richard
Analeigh Tipton Caroline

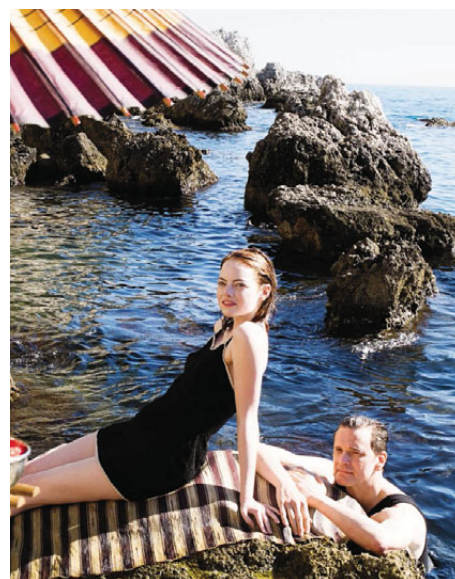
©Europacorp, TF1
Films Production, Grive Productions
Production Companies Universal Pictures presents a Europacorp production

Taiwan, the present. Lucy is a young American woman studying in Taipei. Her boyfriend forces her to deliver a suitcase to notorious Korean gangster Mr Jang. When the deal goes wrong, Jang's henchmen interrogate Lucy and knock her out. Waking up, Lucy discovers that she and three men have had pouches of CPH4, a synthetic version of the chemical that stimulates brain growth in fetuses, surgically implanted in their stomachs. Each of them is given a fake passport and a ticket to a different European city. The men escorting Lucy to the airport attempt to rape her; one of them repeatedly kicks her, breaking open the packet in her stomach. As the CPH4 enters her bloodstream, it allows Lucy to access 20 per cent of her brain, giving her super-strength and martial-arts skills. She escapes, then goes to a hospital to have the packets removed. Her brainpower continues to grow, and she understands that she will soon die. Lucy rushes to Paris to reach Professor Norman, who specialises in brain growth. She enlists the help of Parisian police captain Pierre Del Rio to track down her fellow mules so that she can take the rest of the CPH4. The Korean gangsters follow, attempting to recoup the drugs. Rendezvousing with Professor Norman and his colleagues, Lucy transforms herself into a computer in order to preserve all the knowledge she's unlocked, and disintegrates into a USB stick. While the others wonder where she's gone, Del Rio receives a text message that tells him: "I am everywhere."

Reviewed by Violet Lucca

Taking a cue from the latest season of *Louie*, Woody Allen's *Magic in the Moonlight* is a comedy that has very few jokes. Instead of the director's idiosyncratic punchlines we have cutesy quarrelling between grumpy magician Stanley (Colin Firth) and Sophie (Emma Stone), the sweet young psychic he's intent on debunking. As my colleague Nicolas Rapold has noted elsewhere, the unfortunate parallel between this plot ("an older entertainer trying to prove that a young woman is lying") and Dylan Farrow's renewed public allegations of sexual abuse by Allen has the potential to overshadow almost everything else about the film. (Such a coincidence would certainly be taken as proof of guilt by the wealthy, eager believers who parade around in the film.)

Like much of the mediocre-but-not-terrible section of Allen's corpus (such as *Whatever Works* and *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger*), this is an intentionally slight outing; if Allen hadn't just experienced a bitter trial in the court of public opinion, *Magic* would've been written off for feeling like an overlong episode of *Downton Abbey*. It's also a dulled mishmash of character arcs familiar from everything from *Annie Hall* (1977) to *Midnight in Paris* (2011). When Stanley quotes Nietzsche to the 'low-born' American Sophie, it's not about making a salient or interesting point but establishing his superiority over her. The particular choice of philosopher, paired with Stanley's crankiness and gloom, also makes clear the longstanding Allen assertion that intellect, however marginally above average it may be, is a burden. Sophie takes these putdowns in her stride and – more improbable than her apparent ability to communicate with the spirit world – becomes attracted to this much older, wholly unromantic man. It's hard to tell if her attraction is because of these 'lessons', as she's less a fully developed human being than a method of siphoning off his cynicism, turning him from a Nietzsche into a Kierkegaard. Stanley's longstanding hostility towards the mystical comes from a profound sadness that something more doesn't exist, a 'secret' he admits in various maundering speeches to Sophie, his dear aunt Vanessa and no one in particular while sitting in Vanessa's parlour. In those moments, it's hard not to be reminded of Isaac in *Manhattan*



Old tricks: Emma Stone, Colin Firth

(1979), pensively making a list of reasons why life is worth living; is it also a coincidence that the final item is the face of the 17-year-old girl he's in love with? No, because it's the same pathos trick, pulled out of 35-year storage.

Firth is pitch perfect as the curmudgeonly Stanley, wincing and shaking his head as theatrically as his stage persona 'Wei Ling Soo', whose act centres on unbridled orientalism with Egyptian mummies, Bengal tigers and sexy assistants in short cheongsams. Stone and her huckster mother (Marcia Gay Harden) aren't given many opportunities to play off one another, but individually they master moving between insouciance and assured prophetic statements. Even though the rest of the players – Hamish Linklater, Jacki Weaver, Eileen Atkins – were, like Inez's Tea Partier father in *Midnight in Paris*, written on a cocktail napkin, they have plenty of presence. The sumptuous, isolated setting is used to full effect by cinematographer Darius Khondji, who captures a dazzling array of warm and cool tones all too often missed by those less skilful. As long as you are happy to distinguish between the artist and the work, you'll probably enjoy seeing this on a plane in a few months. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers Letty Aronson
Stephen Tenenbaum
Edward Walson
Written by Woody Allen
Director of Photography Darius Khondji
Editor Alisa Lepselter
Production Designer Anne Seibel
Sound Jean-Marie Blondel
Costume Design Sonia Grande

in association with Gravier Productions, Inc. a Dippermouth Production
in association with Perdido Productions & Ske-Dat-De-Dat Productions
Executive Producer Ronald L. Cheez

CAST
Eileen Atkins Aunt Vanessa
Colin Firth Stanley Crawford, 'Wei Ling Soo', 'Stanley Taplinger'
Marcia Gay Harden Mrs Baker
Hamish Linklater

Production Companies Warner Bros. Pictures presents

Brice Catledge
Simon McBurney
Howard Burkan
Emma Stone
Sophie Baker
Jacki Weaver
Grace Catledge
Erica Leerhsen
Caroline Catledge
Catherine McCormack
Olivia
Jeremy Shamos
George

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor Warner Bros. Distributors (UK)

France, 1928. Howard asks his best friend and fellow illusionist Stanley to travel to the Côte d'Azur to debunk a young medium, Sophie, who has ingratiated herself with the wealthy Catledge family and is engaged to one of its heirs, Brice. Stanley accepts the challenge but on arrival discovers that Sophie seems to know everything about him. He eventually concludes that she's not a fake, and holds a press conference announcing her to be proof of the otherworldly. Stanley also renounces his scepticism and breaks off his engagement with his dour fiancée back in London. When his aunt Vanessa is involved in a car crash, Stanley rushes to the hospital and almost prays – but stops himself, renewing his faithlessness. Sophie and Howard reveal that they were in cahoots, and that this has all been an elaborate joke at Stanley's expense. Stanley forgives them and realises that he is in love with Sophie. Initially she rejects his marriage proposal but soon returns to him.

Maps to the Stars

Canada/Germany/France 2014

Director: David Cronenberg

Certificate 18 111m 37s

See Feature
on page 46

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

As the dual-layer title sequence suggests, *Maps to the Stars* wants it two ways: it wants to be both an excoriating satire of movie-biz absurdity and a cathartic tragedy of ancient Greek proportions. The background to the credits blends street-maps of Hollywood – of the kind once used to guide tourists on drive-pasts of movie-star homes – and old star-maps of the heavens, the latter invoking astrological beliefs about fated lives and manifest destinies. David Cronenberg's visual approach – very different from *Cosmopolis* (2012), but pitched equally far from social realism – skilfully keeps both perspectives in balance. The first scene, with Agatha (Mia Wasikowska) curled up on a bus ride, could easily be showing her taking the Hollywood tour but turns out to show her return to the womb of Los Angeles from a seven-year incarceration in Florida: a fateful return to terminate her incestuous family, a project she began seven years earlier when she drugged her brother and set fire to the family home. Moments later she's meeting Jerome (Robert Pattinson), the driver she's booked, and a jokey reference back to *Cosmopolis* (no stretch limo is available today) takes the film straight into the realm of play.

The script, by novelist and *New Yorker* writer Bruce Wagner, spends a good half-hour sending up assorted grisly Hollywood stereotypes before it starts connecting its dots. There's the monstrously self-regarding diva Havana Segrand (Julianne Moore), who plunges into her own hidden insecurities by pleading for the lead role in a remake of a movie that starred her late mother. There's the charlatan 'guru' Stafford Weiss (John Cusack), who hosts 'The Hour of Personal Power' on TV and preaches the very Cronenbergian doctrine that mental pain can be tracked to some part of the body. His ruthless wife Cristina (Olivia Williams) manages their money-tree of a son, Benjie (Evan Bird), a Bieberesque child star who keeps trying to score and has already been in rehab. Both Havana and Benjie are haunted by ghosts, she the spirit of her derisive mother (Sarah Gadon), he the spirit of a young fan he once visited in her cancer ward. It's not until it becomes clear that Agatha is the estranged daughter of Stafford and Cristina – and the elder sister of the awesomely brattish Benjie – that the storyline begins to coalesce and Agatha's plan to eradicate the Weiss family comes into focus. Agatha likes Paul Eluard's poetry; no doubt she sees LA as the *Capitale de la douleur*.

The nearest to a 'normal' character is the peripheral chauffeur-actor-writer Jerome, evidently a surrogate for Wagner himself; according to the press notes, Wagner did work as a limo driver when he fetched up in Hollywood in the 1990s, and began work on what eventually became this script at the time. That backstory helps to explain the absence of Marvel superheroes, Transformers and the like from the film's account of 'contemporary' Hollywood; this is a world in which the studios are still producing John Hughes-style comedies about bad babysitters and Sydney Pollack-style romantic melodramas. However dated, the satire is often agreeably extreme. Benjie's



Dark stars: Mia Wasikowska

first temper tantrum climaxes with him screaming "Show me your cunt, Jew faggot!" at a (male) agent, and when Havana and Agatha finally turn on each other Havana is battered to death with a Canadian Genie – presumably a homage to the death-by-Oscar-statue scene in *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (1970), but the specifically Canadian reference seems like a Cronenberg touch.

Wagner's characteristically venomous satire of Hollywood makes the film Cronenberg's equivalent of Paul Schrader's *The Canyons* (2013): Wagner is a smarter and funnier writer than Bret Easton Ellis, but neither 'vision' amounts to much more than sour grapes. It's the other side of the film, the weird self-purging of an incest trauma, which is more original and unexpected – and

also more in line with the best of Cronenberg's back-catalogue. The revelation that Stafford and Cristina Weiss are both husband and wife and brother and sister comes relatively late in the film, and the script is purposely vague about how they became an incestuous couple in the first place. Whether or not their breach of the incest taboo explains why Agatha and Benjie are so fucked up, it provides the rationale for Agatha's project to destroy her parents and symbolically 'marry' Benjie in a death-pact that will free all of them from their misery. We don't know how Cristina self-combusts, but we do know why. Fleeting, through the flames of self-destruction, we can glimpse the long-lost Cronenberg of *Stereo* (1969) and *Crimes of the Future* (1970), icily sardonic as ever. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Martin Katz
Said Ben Said
Producer
Michel Merkt
Screenplay
Bruce Wagner
Director of Photography
Peter Suschitzky
Edited by
Ronald Sanders
Production Designer
Carol Spier
Music
Howard Shore
Sound Mixer
Nicolas Cantin
Costume Designer
Denise Cronenberg

@Starmaps
Productions Inc.,
Integral Film GmbH
Production Companies
Entertainment
One presents in
association with
Prospero Pictures
and SBS Productions
a Starmaps
Productions, SBS
Productions, Integral

Film production
With the participation
of Téléfilm Canada,
Ontario Media
Development
Corporation, The
Harold Greenberg
Fund, Canal+, OCS,
Canadian Film or
Video Production
Tax Credit
In co-production
with Axone Invest
A David
Cronenberg film
In association
with VIP Cinéma -
Axone Invest, The
Movie Network
Executive Producers
Renee Tab
Benedict Carver

CAST

Julianne Moore
Havana Segrand
Mia Wasikowska
Agatha Weiss
Olivia Williams
Cristina Weiss
Evan Bird
Benjie Weiss
Sarah Gadon

Clarice Taggart
Niamh Wilson
Sam
Dawn Greenhalgh
Genie
John Cusack
Dr Stafford Weiss
Robert Pattinson
Jerome Fontana
Kiara Glasco
Cammy
Jonathan Watton
Steri Carruth
Jennifer Gibson
Starla Gent

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
E1 Films

Burn-scarred Agatha Weiss returns to California from seven years of custodial care in Florida, befriends the chauffeur Jerome Fontana, and (thanks to her Twitter friendship with Carrie Fisher) gets a job as personal assistant to the fading star Havana Segrand. In Agatha's absence, her father Stafford has become a famous self-help guru with many high-profile clients (including Havana), while her mother Cristina manages Agatha's 13-year-old brother Benjie, a child star fresh out of a spell in rehab. Havana is desperate to star in a remake of her late mother Clarice Taggart's most famous movie, but is haunted by Clarice's mocking ghost. Stafford discovers that Agatha is back and tries to bribe her to leave for good, fearing her malicious pyromania. The truculent Benjie is haunted by the ghost of a girl he once visited in hospital as a publicity stunt. Director Damien Javitz casts Havana in the remake when a bereavement forces his first choice, Azita Wachtel, to drop out. Havana reactivates her mojo by seducing Jerome and then picks a fight with Agatha, who batters her to death with a Genie statuette. Unable to score drugs, Benjie strangles his young co-star Roy, apparently believing him to be the ghost of the hospital girl. Agatha tells Benjie that their parents are, in fact, siblings, and sends him to get Stafford's wedding ring; he finds Cristina in flames. Benjie rejoins Agatha for a mock marriage ceremony. They overdose on drugs and prepare to expire, quoting a Paul Eluard poem.

Million Dollar Arm

USA 2014

Director: Craig Gillespie

Certificate PG 123m 55s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

"The mediator between head and hands must be the heart!" is the closing lesson of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* – the head being management, the hands the labouring grunts and the heart what convinces the former to treat the latter humanely. Hardly more nuanced arguments are still trotted out by those who (profess to) believe – despite copious evidence to the contrary – that basic human decency is the invisible hand that can keep under-regulated capitalism functioning smoothly and beneficially.

That's also the takeaway of *Million Dollar Arm*, in which sports agent J.B. Bernstein (Jon Hamm, in smooth *Mad Men* mode) scours India for prospective baseball players. His agency lacks clients and is about to go under, so he sees no option but to take money from Chang (Tzi Ma), an investor interested in opening up the Asian continent for baseball business, and train discoveries Rinku Singh (Suraj Sharma) and Dinesh Patel (Madhur Mittal), who've never played the game before in their lives. J.B. is initially callous, too busy with his nice house and his different-woman-every-night lifestyle to be a mensch. But, following his charges' initial disastrous try-out, a talking-to from his tenant Brenda (Lake Bell, mistaking annoying twitchiness for captivating vitality) sets him straight ("They just need to see you care") and Bernstein musters empathy; he gets to feel good and also guarantees a solid return on investment, the two effects symbiotically intertwined.

As a run-of-the-mill timewaster *Million Dollar Arm* is smooth enough, its views of India – cows, street urchins – no more clichéd than its presentation of LA (freeways, skyscrapers, the Griffith Observatory). ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Mark Ciardi
Gordon Gray

Executive

Joe Roth
Written by
Tom McCarthy

Director of

Photography

Gyula Pados

Film Editor

Tatiana S. Riegel

Production

Designer

Barry Robison

Music

A.R. Rahman

Sound Mixer

José Antonio García

Costume Designer

Kirston Leigh Mann

©Disney

Enterprises, Inc.

Production

Companies

Disney presents a

Roth Films, Mayhem

Pictures production

A Craig Gillespie film

Producers

Palak Patel

Kevin Halloran

Bill Simmons

Connor Schell

Film Extracts

Pride of the

Yankees (1942)

CAST

Jon Hamm

J.B. Bernstein

Aasif Mandvi

Aash

Bill Paxton

Tom House

Suraj Sharma

Rinku Singh

Lake Bell

Brenda

Alan Arkin

Ray

Madhur Mittal

Dinesh Kumar Patel

Pitobash

Amit Rohan,

Deepesh Solanki

Tzi Ma

Chang

Darshan Jariwala

Vivek

Greg Alan Williams

Doug

Alynn Rachel

Theresa

Dolby Digital

In Colour

Prints by

DeLuxe

[2.35:1]

Part-subtitled

Distributor

Buena Vista

International (UK)

Los Angeles, 2008. Selfish sports agent J.B. Bernstein uses an Asian investor's money to search for baseball pitchers in India. After an extensive search, he finds two promising prospects, Rinku Singh and Dinesh Patel. Without enough time to train properly, the two have a disastrous try-out. However, the now caring Bernstein arranges another try-out, and both boys are offered a contract.

A Most Wanted Man

United Kingdom/Germany/USA 2014

Director: Anton Corbijn

Certificate 15 121m 40s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

At the start of *A Most Wanted Man*, an onscreen text reminds us it was in Hamburg that the 9/11 terrorists planned their operation, but that they escaped arrest thanks to rivalries between the various security agencies in the city. The climax of Anton Corbijn's film seems to suggest that, in that regard, not much has changed.

In John le Carré's source novel, maverick semi-official German spymaster Günther Bachmann isn't the lead character; more attention is paid to Scottish-German banker Thomas Brue and human rights lawyer Annabel Richter. The film skews this balance, allotting Bachmann the lion's share of screentime. No cause for complaint in that the role's taken by the much-missed Philip Seymour Hoffman in his last completed film. He's hardly stretched by it – the seedy, dishevelled, sardonic spook, boozy and chain-smoking, wearily at odds with the world, is well within his discomfort zone – but he inhabits the part with his characteristic baggy excellence.

The downside to this shift in emphasis, though, is that we spend a lot of time with Bachmann's team while they carry out their surveillance activities – which involve lengthy scenes of people having muttered, evasive conversations in cars, bars and cafes, or lurking in offices or the back of vans clamped to headphones and gazing into screens. An actor as talented as Daniel Brühl, playing a member of the team, gets little respite from the headphones stint. True, no one goes to le Carré for slam-bang action of the Bond-Bourne stamp, but Fernando Meirelles with *The Constant Gardener* (2005), and Thomas Alfredson with *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011), have shown how the author's fascination with procedure and the insidious workings of treachery can be handled with dramatic flair and tension. Corbijn's film feels like near-on two hours of conscientiously subfusc grey with a brief action

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Stephen Cornwell

Gail Egan

Malte Grunert

Simon Cornwell

Andrea Caldenwood

Screenplay

Andrew Bovell

Based on the novel

by John le Carré

Director of

Photography

Benoit Delhomme

Edited by

Claire Simpson

Production Designer

Sebastian Krawinkel

Music

Herbert Grönemeyer

Sound Mixer

Garth John

Costume Designer

Nicole Fischbacher

©A Most Wanted

Man Ltd/Amusement

Park Film GmbH

Production

Companies

Film4 and Demarest

Films present

in association

with FilmNation

Entertainment

In co-production

with Senator Film

Supported by

Filmförderung

Hamburg

Schleswig-Holstein,

Medienboard Berlin

Brandenburg,

Deutscher

FilmFörderFond

A Potboiler, Ink

Factory, Amusement

Park production

A film by Anton

Corbijn

With the support of

the MEDIA Production

Guarantee Fund

Developed with the

assistance of Film4



Philip Seymour Hoffman, Robin Wright

sequence unleashed in the last five minutes.

There are compensations. Hoffman of course, and several other cast members who make the most of what they're given: Nina Hoss as Bachmann's deputy (and possibly lover), watching him with ironic tenderness; Grigory Dobrygin as the tortured Russo-Chechen asylum-seeker whose arrival in Hamburg sparks the plot; Robin Wright as duplicitous CIA agent Martha Sullivan; Rainer Bock as Bachmann's nemesis, beady-eyed intelligence head Dieter Mohr. As the banker Thomas Brue, holder of tainted funds from the dirtiest recesses of the Cold War, Willem Dafoe seems lost; Andrew Bovell's script strips him of the complex backstory and anguished moral ambiguity his character is granted in the novel, leaving him little to do but react. As always, ex-photographer Corbijn's visual sense is acute, and his deployment of grimy Hamburg locations and dark, drab interiors provides an evocative framework for the downbeat narrative; but in his two previous features, *Control* (2007) and *The American* (2010), he combined these qualities with more emotionally engaging stories. The slow-moving *A Most Wanted Man* never grips as it should. ☹

Executive Producers

John le Carré

Tessa Ross

Sam Englehardt

William D. Johnson

CAST

Philip Seymour

Hoffman

Günther Bachmann

Rachel McAdams

Annabel Richter

Willem Dafoe

Thomas Brue,

'Tommy'

Grigory Dobrygin

Issa Karpov

Homayoun Ershadi

Dr Faisal Abdullah

Nina Hoss

Irma Frey

Daniel Brühl

Maximilian

Herbert Grönemeyer

Michael Axelrod

Mehdi Dehbi

Jamal

Rainer Bock

Dieter Mohr

Vicky Krieps

Niki

Kostja Ullmann

Rasheed

Franz Hartwig

Karl

Martin Wuttke

the Admiral

Derya Alabora

Leyla Oktay

Tamer Yigit

Melik Oktay

Robin Wright

Martha Sullivan

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Part-subtitled

Distributor

E1 Films

is restrained by CIA agent Martha Sullivan, with whom Bachmann forms an uneasy alliance.

Bachmann is granted 72 hours to trap Abdullah. With Annabel's help Karpov contacts Brue and proves he's entitled to the inheritance. Annabel hides Karpov in an apartment owned by her brother and sets up a meeting between Karpov, Brue, Abdullah and herself. In Abdullah's list of respectable charities to receive the money is a shipping company he controls which Bachmann believes is a channel to terrorists. Bachmann poses as a taxi driver to take Abdullah away for interrogation – but the taxi is blocked by Mohr's men. Abdullah and Karpov are hauled off, while Sullivan watches. Bachmann howls in frustration.

Night Will Fall

United Kingdom/Israel/Denmark/Germany/Italy 2014
 Director: André Singer
 Certificate 15 75m Os

Reviewed by Nick James

On the editorial page of the last *S&S* issue I encouraged readers to seek out *Night Will Fall* – an unusual use of that polemical space but if ever there was a special case, this is it. André Singer's documentary contains the most piercing concentration camp footage that, as far as I am aware, exists, that of the heaped dead at Bergen-Belsen being lifted, carcass after emaciated carcass, by arrested SS guards and flung into huge burial pits prepared under Allied supervision. To recap the gist of the editorial, I had seen this footage before and hoped never to have to see it again, but realised, after watching Singer's film, the perhaps obvious truth that, no matter how gruelling it is, it's not to be shelved or left to memory to preserve.

The Belsen material was just one part of the footage shot by soldiers and gathered by Sidney Bernstein on behalf of the Allied authorities in order to make a cautionary film, *German Concentration Camps Factual Survey*, to show to the conquered German population so that they could see what had been perpetrated in their name. Placed by Singer in the first half of this careful film, the burial-pit sequences are, of course, as harrowing as ever. The mind reels again (I'm glad to say) and the reaction is also physical. To get upset, though, is no help to the critic, and herein lies a difficulty for Singer's exploring of his theme, which is the Allied army film units and the importance of their perhaps unanticipated role as the Holocaust's recording angels.

Through excellent use of archive, Lynette Singer's script and the testimony of Leonard Berney, a British soldier who was among the first on the scene at Belsen, the immediacy of the camp's liberation and its international impact is conveyed with great skill and feeling. However, the near-intolerable disgust and shame at humanity these images can inculcate does create a barrier (at least for this reviewer) to the absorbing of more and more detail as successive accounts of absolute horror build, while at the same time the assembly of Bernstein's documentary is related with calm. By the time John Krish, then a future documentarian, recalls in the film's second half that the footage of the bodies heaped around the camp and on the railway carriages at Dachau (which was the US army's key experience of the Holocaust) looked even more gruesome in negative, the last thing you want to consider are the aesthetics of the shots. I don't disbelieve Krish; it's just hard to think in those terms given the sheer weight of what we've seen by this point.

It's difficult, too, to be cool enough to appreciate fully the various sources Singer employs, especially the dynamic between the fresh interviews with the last survivors aware of the purpose of this actual work and the archive interviews given presumably for slightly different purposes some time ago. The problem with the most infamous of concentration camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau, was that it wasn't until a couple of weeks after the camp's liberation, when the few surviving inmates had at least recovered some of their dignity, that the Soviet cameramen arrived. They got the survivors to do some reenactment, putting their striped camp clothes back on and walking about



Faces in the crowd: *Night Will Fall*

behind barbed wire. Nonetheless camp survivor Branko Lustig, the producer of *Schindler's List*, is able to find himself as a child in those images and argues that what the Soviets recorded has its own authenticity – it is the real place, the real people and the real circumstances.

There is, as you'd expect, a vivid urgency to all the recall recorded here. What suffers a little is the more stately business of the bureaucratic and political fights Bernstein had to deal with, which can seem like distraction in this context.

Singer's structural dilemma seems plain: if you keep the burial-pit material for some sort of climax, you lose the force of that first Belsen discovery *and* you send people out into the street profoundly depressed, yet if you do what he does here, you're asking audiences to steel themselves to an astonishing level for an armchair course in bearing the unbearable while learning about how and why these images were collected. Most of the time he succeeds in this unenviable task, though, and, again, I urge you to see it. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
 Sally Angel
 Brett Ratner
Written by
 Lynette Singer
Director of Photography
 Richard Blanshard
Editors
 Arik Lahav
 Stephen Miller
Composer
 Nicholas Singer
Sound Recordists

Paul Paragon
 Amir Boverman
 ©The British Film Institute/Spring Films Ltd/Angel TV/Cinephil
Production Companies
 BFI, The Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts, RatPac Documentary Films, Danish Film Institute present a Spring

Films and Angel TV production in association with Cinephil, Final Cut for Real a co-production with MDR and NDR in co-operation with ARTE
 In co-operation with S.H. Channel 8
 A film by André Singer
 In association with Cinephil and Final Cut for Real, GA&A

Produced with the support of The Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts - Cinema Project With the participation of the Leon Recanati Foundation
 Supported by the Cultural Administration, Israel Ministry of Culture and Sport, The Israel Film Council

Made with the support of the BFI's Film Fund
Executive Producers
 Richard Melman
 James Packer
 Stephen Frears
WITH
 narrators
 Helena Bonham Carter
 for German

Concentration Camps Factual Survey:
Jasper Britton
In Colour
 [1.85:1]
Distributor
 BFI

In spring 1945, elements of the retreating German army asked for a truce with advancing British forces. They wanted to withdraw to avoid fighting in and around the Bergen-Belsen camp because of a typhus epidemic. The British agreed; approaching the camp, they found the full horror of the camps exposed to western scrutiny for the first time. The atrocity became widely known after Richard Dimbleby's onsite report was broadcast on the BBC. Soon, the Allies decided that a documentary should be made as a record and entrusted the task to Sidney Bernstein, then chief of the Psychological Warfare Film Section of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) in London.

The burials of large numbers of bodies in pits at Belsen were recorded in detail. Further material was gathered from Soviet military cameramen – news about

Soviet-liberated camps had previously been dismissed as propaganda. For a while Bernstein recruited Alfred Hitchcock, who returned from the US to oversee the editing. As the war ended, the intention became to create a film (entitled 'German Concentration Camps Factual Survey') to show to German civilians.

The US army's own horrific experience came with the liberation of Dachau. Concern about the difficulty of watching the material shot there combined with American impatience at the slowness of Bernstein's team to create a hiatus. Billy Wilder was asked to create an alternative quick film, 'Death Mills' (1945), and soon growing tension with the Soviets and the sorry state of German civilian morale led to the shelving of 'Factual Survey', which is now being completed by the Imperial War Museum.

Palo Alto

USA 2013
Director: Gia Coppola

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Palo Alto started life in 2010 as a collection of a dozen short stories (each with a different narrator-protagonist) by the actor James Franco, their narrative and psychological wispiness offset by a genuine facility for spare, laconic description. The same is true of Gia Coppola's feature debut: although populated by an overly familiar collection of archetypes (shy virgin April, talented but troubled youth Teddy, local bad boy Fred, estranged and distant parents, the teacher with more than homework coaching on his mind), the film has enough going on between the lines to suggest that she might produce something rather impressive given further opportunities – which, given her lineage (grandfather Francis has a voiceover cameo as a stern judge), seems likely.

The structure and characters are primarily taken from April's story, with elements derived from some of the other segments. For instance, a graphic gang-bang from the story 'Chinatown' is told through Fred's voiceover as the camera scrutinises the face of his intended conquest Emily, to whom these things have not yet happened. This is a more resonant treatment than Franco's, whose solipsistic narrator barely registers the woman's existence except as a blank purveyor of sexual services.

Self-absorption threads through the film. Although clearly smitten with each other, April and Teddy only communicate directly in banalities; he compensates by drinking to excess. The parents are just as bad – April's dad overzealously rewrites her homework, while her mother is permanently on the phone to her presumed lover; direct affection seems programmed. Fred's father apparently lives alone with his marijuana fumes – Teddy assumes that his apparent advances are sexual but he seems more interested in a simple human connection. Meanwhile teacher Mr B (played by Franco), spends his spare time on unsatisfying dates when he's not seducing his charges, a detail given an additional frisson by the exposure of Franco's



The kids aren't all right: Emma Roberts

real-life attempt at chatting up a teenager online. *Palo Alto* is one of California's most expensive communities, but money can't buy happiness – and when the adults are such terrible role models, what hope is there for their offspring?

Small wonder that Coppola, 25 at the time of filming, is on their side: she has a particularly acute ear for the lack of self-esteem underpinning the brash chatter of April's more sexually experienced classmates. Emily, for example, seems to give sexual favours to practically any passing male, not because of innate sluttishness but because it means she doesn't have to talk to them – although her mask slips when she admits to never having been in love. Three excellent central performances from Emma Roberts, Jack Kilmer and Nat Wolff paper over narrative cracks, with Coppola's long-term friend Kilmer proving a real find – despite his ancestry (father Val has a cameo here), he'd never acted before.

Autumn Durald's crepuscular cinematography catches the pervasively anxious mood: although rarely as confrontationally grim as Larry Clark's *Kids* (1995), *Palo Alto* is equally blunt about what understandably confused adolescents will get up to when caught between childhood and adulthood with every material advantage but no clear road map. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Sebastian Pardo
Vince Jolivet
Miles Levy
Adriana Rotaru
Written by
Gia Coppola
Director of Photography
Autumn Cheyenne
Durald
Editor
Leo Scott
Production Designer
Sara Jamieson
Music
Dev Hynes
Robert Schwartzman
Sound Designer
Richard Beggs
Costume Designer
Courtney Hoffman

@Rabbit Bandini
Productions
Production Company
Rabbit Bandini
Productions

CAST

James Franco
Mr B
Emma Roberts
April
Nat Wolff
Fred
Zoe Levin
Emily
Jack Kilmer
Teddy
Val Kilmer
Stewart
Claudia Levy
Shauna
Olivia Crocicchia
Chrissy
Chris Messina
Mitch
Keegan Allen
Skull
Micah Nelson
Michael
Don Novello
Mr Wilson
Jacqui Getty
Jane
Andrew Lutheran
Ivan
Bo Mitchell
Jack O

Bailey Coppola
Seth

[uncredited]
Talia Shire
Mrs Ganem
Margaret Qualley
Raquel

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Metrodome
Distribution Ltd

Palo Alto, California, the present. Artistically talented teenager Teddy hangs out with local bad boy Fred. Shy April plays in a girls' soccer team coached by Mr B, and regularly babysits his son Michael. At a party, April and Teddy chat, then walk to a nearby graveyard with Fred, carve a heart into a tree and return. Later that evening, more casually than intentionally, Teddy and April pair off with other people, in Teddy's case with April's classmate Emily. Driving home drunk, Teddy crashes his car, and is sentenced to community service at a children's library. Fred sweet-talks Emily into bed. Fred visits Teddy and they draw penises on the library books. Mr B helps April with her homework, and they kiss. Teddy gets stoned with Fred's father Mitch, who seems overly friendly towards him. Fred and Teddy cut down the graveyard tree. Mr B tells April that he's fallen in love with her, and they have sex. April's team loses a football match, the aftermath suggesting that Mr B is attracted to her teammate Raquel. Michael tells Emily that Raquel also babysits for him. At another party, Fred taunts Emily and she hits him with a bottle. Teddy and April have a heart-to-heart conversation that's interrupted by Fred. Teddy and Fred go to drug dealer Skull, whom Fred intends to kill though he doesn't go through with it. Worried about Fred's mental state, Teddy gets out of his car. Fred accelerates away from him.

Planes Fire & Rescue

USA 2014
Director: Bobs Gannaway
Certificate U 83m 36s

Reviewed

by Kate Stables

A pallid aerial rerun of *Cars* in its first outing, *Planes: Fire & Rescue* sensibly swaps racing drama for an action-disaster story. Not that there's a huge amount of difference in the rookie-trained-by-gruff-old-timer format, or the obligatory lessons in teamwork and not quitting when the going gets tough. But the introduction of notions of public service and self-sacrifice are mildly refreshing (hero Dusty willingly trashes his engine to save a couple of stranded campervans in a giant forest fire).

Voicework and casting are solid if unsurprising (Ed Harris as stern taskmaster Blade, Wes Studi spoofing himself as dourly mystic Windlifter) but the dialogue is either functional or arch ("I kicked As-ton Martin out there"). The group action sequences are well orchestrated, though, involving more jeopardy and tension than the plane-in-trouble routines of yore, and with high-quality renderings of the sudden lethal leaps of forest fires.

Older viewers will register the return of stock figures and situations from disaster templates such as *The Towering Inferno*, particularly in the shape of self-serving park manager Cad Spinner, diverting both cash and water supplies for his grandiose hotel. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Ferrell Barron
Story/Screenplay
Bobs Gannaway
Jeffrey M. Howard
Editor
Dan Molina
Art Director
Toby Wilson
Original Score
Composed by
Mark Mancina
Sound Design
Todd Toon
Animation Supervisor
Ethan Hurd

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Enterprises, Inc.
Production Companies
Disney, Disneytoon
Studios
Executive Producer
John Lasseter

VOICE CAST

Dane Cook
Dusty Crophopper
Ed Harris
Blade Ranger
Julie Bowen
Lil' Dipper
Curtis Armstrong
Maru
John Michael Higgins
Cad Spinner
Hal Holbrook
Mayday
Wes Studi
Windlifter
Brad Garrett
Chug
Teri Hatcher
Dottie
Stacy Keach
Skipper
Cedric the Entertainer
Leadbottom

Danny Mann
Sparky

Dolby Digital/ Dolby Atmos
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Buena Vista
International (UK)

Propwash Junction, present day. Crop-duster Dusty abandons his racing career due to an irreparable gearbox fault. The local airport is threatened with closure after he causes an accidental fire. To save it, Dusty undergoes tough training as a firefighting plane at Piston Peak National Park but has to be rescued after botching a manoeuvre during a fire. When a selfish park manager diverts the water supply during a huge forest fire, Dusty and the crew improvise to clear the blocked roads and railway. Dusty pushes his gearbox to breaking point during this daring rescue, crashing afterwards. Master mechanic Maru rebuilds his gearbox. The Piston Peak team perform an aerial display at the Propwash Junction air show.

Salomé

USA 2013
Director: Al Pacino

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

As the princess Salomé roughly cradles the severed head of Jokanaan ("the only man I ever loved"), the palace guards and congregated guests crane their necks to see. Having given the order for his execution, Salomé kisses Jokanaan's dead mouth, and her disturbed behaviour is like manna to these spectators, who are appalled and absorbed in equal measure. These rubbernecking onlookers recall present-day paparazzi and the hunger for celebrity culture they administer to – affording the only contemporary parallel in a film that is less period-set than an out-of-time adaptation of Oscar Wilde's tragedy of obsession.

Originally written in French, Wilde's *Salomé* was published in English translation in 1894, and was prefigured by many famous paintings. Wilde's play tells the story of the lustful virgin Salomé, who – to borrow from 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' – kills the thing she loves, the captive prophet Jokanaan, because he scorns her kiss. Al Pacino directs this adaptation, filmed during a 2006 run of the play performed by the Wadsworth Theatre in Los Angeles (directed by Estelle Parsons) and using the same performance space. The minimal set design mirrors the black backgrounds of Caravaggio and Bernardino Luini's paintings of Salomé rather than the byzantine palace interior of Gustave Moreau's 19th-century depiction – and with reason. Wilde's language is lustrous and incantatory, symbolic and packed with sensuous imagery, making any circumstantial decoration redundant.

This could not have been pulled off without extraordinary performances – but that's what we have here. Pacino, reprising the role of King Herod (he played the part on Broadway in 1992), is a presence so strange and outlandish it's occasionally funny. Freakish-fey, lascivious, prey to his own superstitions, Pacino's tetrarch scratches an incestuous itch. He is infatuated with his stepdaughter Salomé and, with bottom lip stuck out, cajoles her into dancing for him in exchange for anything she desires. She chooses the head of Jokanaan, and when he tries to persuade her otherwise, promising treasures "bedecked" and "encrusted" with stones, his



Days of being Wilde: Al Pacino

consonants are like a castellated Citadel wall; a vocal performance rarely recorded on film.

But the undoubted star is Jessica Chastain (an unknown when she was cast in the role), whose rampant performance and reading of the text are astonishing. The incandescence of her rages could put out the moon, and the gorgon-grit of her voice when she raises it in anger is impossible to reconcile with the actress's small, pale body. Framed in extreme close-up, her head upheld to the taller Jokanaan – amorously describing his mouth as "like a pomegranate cut with a knife of ivory" – she is intoxicating.

Pacino's version of the play is full of circles: Jokanaan's pacing the perimeter of his cistern-prison; the moon; Herod's death ring; and Salomé's unrelenting obsession, like an ouroboros. A far cry from the live play screened by satellite to arthouse cinemas, captured statically from front of stage, *Salomé* is directed for film. Its long takes lend the immediacy of live action, while Pacino's camera moves among the actors, wheeling in circles as if to tie them into fateful relation and into a gyre of dire consequence.

The guerrilla camerawork of the opening section – a palace banquet prologue, filmed offstage – is sandy-yellow with poor lighting, and is the only misstep; the rest, a heady and immersive tale of a femme fatale for all time. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Barry Navidi
Robert Fox
Based on
Oscar Wilde's stage play *Salomé*
directed by
Estelle Parsons
Director of Photography
Benoît Delhomme
Edited by
David Leonard
Jeremy Weiss
Pasquale Buba
Music
Jeff Beal
Supervising Sound Editor
Mike Archacki

©Salomé Productions LLC
Production Companies
Chal Productions
presents a Barry

Navidi/Robert Fox production
Executive Producers
Amy Netherlander
Daryl Roth
Mary Stuart
George Ann Mason
Beni Atoori
Andrea Grano
Reza Rashidian
Robert Ekblom

CAST

Jessica Chastain
Salomé, Princess of Judea
Al Pacino
King Herod, 'the Tetrarch', stepfather to Salomé
Kevin Anderson
John the Baptist, 'Jokanaan', cousin of Jesus
Roxanne Hart
Queen Herodias,

mother of Salomé
Geoffrey Owens
Tigellinus
Joe Roseto
Narraboth, young Syrian

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
OmniVerse Vision

A banquet is held at the palace of Herod the tetrarch, who gawks openly at his stepdaughter Salomé. Escaping on to the terrace, Salomé overhears the imprisoned prophet Jokanaan, who prophesies the tetrarch's ruin and slanders Herodias, Salomé's mother, for marrying the murderer of her first husband. Salomé manipulates Narraboth, the captain of the guard who loves her, into letting her see the prisoner. She falls in love with Jokanaan instantly. Narraboth, seeing this, kills himself. Jokanaan recoils from Salomé's kiss. The tetrarch arrives on the terrace with his guests and Herodias, who resents the tetrarch's infatuation with Salomé. The tetrarch asks Salomé to dance for him but she's unwilling. They agree that if Salomé dances, he will give her anything she asks. Salomé performs the dance of the seven veils, and asks for the severed head of Jokanaan in return. The superstitious tetrarch pleads with her to ask for anything but this – but Salomé is adamant and he honours his word. An executioner beheads Jokanaan. His head is delivered to Salomé, who kisses it. The tetrarch, disgusted, leads the company indoors and orders the killing of Salomé.

Sex Tape

USA 2014
Director: Jake Kasdan
Certificate 15 94m 27s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

After a sexually saturated courtship, Annie (Cameron Diaz) and Jay (Jason Segel) rush into marriage, promising each other they won't lapse into platonic doldrums. Two children and several years later, they make a sex tape to revitalise their love life. It works – but Jay omits to erase it from his iPad, and the three-hour opus is uploaded to all the synched tablets he's given away as gifts.

Though its premise might seem a treasure trove for those looking to parse technology's impact as reflected in popular entertainment, *Sex Tape* has few laughs or up-to-the-minute reportage. Hard to imagine, too, how a radio-station employee like Jay could afford to hand out all these devices – the couple presumably aren't beneficiaries of the shameless product placement, which requires marvelling at Apple applications ("That is super-impressive") and helpfully explaining what higher-resolution display means for not-clued-in consumers in the audience.

Annie and Jay's quest for an erection (the only possible cause of sexual failure, evidently) is intended as either funny or sad or possibly both. Drawn out with inept improv, it's neither. Only Rob Lowe – reflexively game to play on his own sex tape misadventures – amuses as a corporate head thinking of buying Annie's mommy blog.

Sex Tape will please neither porn enthusiasts nor the industry's moral opponents. It's seemingly open to the couple's (successful) attempt to restore sex to their relationship but then brings out a cameoing Jack Black as a porn maven to deliver the takeaway lesson: such exercises are "not something you do when things are going well". This allows *Sex Tape* to have it both ways while cautiously coming down on the side of moral condemnation just in case. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Todd Black
Jason Blumenthal
Steve Tisch
Screenplay
Kate Angelo
Jason Segel
Nicholas Stoller
Story
Kate Angelo
Director of Photography
Tim Suhrstedt
Edited by
Tara Timponi
Steve Edwards
Production Designer
Jefferson Sage
Music
Michael Andrews
Production Mixer
John Pritchett
Costume Designer
Debra McGuire

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Film Corporation and

MRC II Distribution
Company LP
Production Companies
Columbia Pictures
presents in association with
MRC and LStar
Capital an Escape
Artists production
A film by Jake Kasdan
Executive Producers
David Householder
Jason Segel
Jake Kasdan
David Bloomfield
Ben Waisbren

CAST

Cameron Diaz
Annie
Jason Segel
Jay
Rob Corddry
Robby
Ellie Kemper

Tess
Rob Lowe
Hank Rosenbaum
Nat Faxon
Max
Nancy Lenahan
Linda
Giselle Eisenberg
Nell
Harrison Holzer
Howard
Sebastian Hedges
Thomas
Clive
Timothy Brennen
Walt
Krisztina Koltai
Marta
Randall Park
Edward

Dolby Digital/ SDDS/Datasat
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Sony Pictures
Releasing

Present-day US. To revitalise their love life, married couple Annie and Jay make a sex tape and upload it to Jay's iPad. Unfortunately, the iPad is synched with other iPads that Jay has given away as gifts, so he and Annie must retrieve all the tablets. The video has also been uploaded to porn website YouPorn but its owner agrees to erase it.

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Step Up All In

USA 2014
Director: Trish Sie
Certificate PG 111m 44s

Reviewed by Calum Marsh

Trish Sie, the director of *Step Up All In*, is chiefly known for her work on 'Here It Goes Again', a music video for the pop-rock band OK Go that went viral in 2006. The video consists of a single take: a wide shot of the band as they elaborately duck and weave their way through a jungle gym of moving treadmills arranged side by side in an empty room. Though hardly impressive aesthetically, it is an extraordinary feat of choreography, and one can see why, on the strength of this video alone, the otherwise inexperienced Sie was handed the reins of the long-running dance franchise. You don't need much formal ingenuity or flamboyance to direct a *Step Up* film; what you need is patience, restraint and, most significantly, a capacity for self-effacement that lets the virtuosity of the performers speak for itself. A *Step Up* film ought to be a showcase for movement, for the dynamism of professional dance. To that end Sie proves adept: as her stars step up, she steps out of the way.

There is of course a narrative to deal with too, but then the *Step Up* films have never been much for storytelling. The set-ups are largely interchangeable: this one concerns a cash-strapped dance troupe's attempts to triumph at a Las Vegas tournament and win a three-year contract as a casino's well-paid nightly entertainment. Naturally there are personal conflicts and calamitous betrayals, as well as the usual flirtations, misunderstandings, role reversals and near-defeats. These elements afford the appealing familiarity of an antiquated genre film – an old-fashioned sort of banality, almost wistfully predictable. But it behoves one to approach a *Step Up* film with its purpose – and its inherent limitations – in mind. It can be safely assumed that nobody will watch *Step Up All In* enthralled by its novelistic intrigue or fascinating machinations of plot; it can be safely assumed, too, that nobody will care. *Step Up All In* rather shrewdly places its bet elsewhere: on the relentless spectacle, the astonishing vigour, of bodies in motion.

The shot reverse shot that opens *Step Up All In* is fairly representative of the film's elegance and efficiency as a vehicle for dance. One shot shows



Mean routine: Parris Goebel, Briana Evigan

a threesome sitting at a black table, facing the camera – a trio of judges auditioning dancers for a television commercial. The second shows an empty room from the judges' perspective, into which dancers soon file. The composition is not unlike the room of treadmills in Sie's famous music video: the wide shot takes in the whole room, our view unobstructed as the hopeful dancers begin their routines, though with a new emphasis on depth owing to skilful use of the 3D frame. What's most remarkable here is the simplicity: the camera's job is merely to take in the action, and the result is effectively a blockbuster action sequence – meticulously choreographed and exquisite to behold, naturally – of rare lucidity. This remains Sie's strategy throughout. It pays off: the film's great many dance numbers are marvels of intricacy and grace, and yet, despite their expanding scope of movement, each retains, in filmmaking terms, the clarity of that opening scene. The result is simply more and better dancing and less of everything else: less plot, less drama, and less interference with the spectacle. The *Step Up* films are like machines calibrated to mete out dance. This latest is no different: it delivers the goods.

They Came Together

USA 2014
Director: David Wain
Certificate 15 83m 12s

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

As with David Wain and Michael Showalter's beloved first feature *Wet Hot American Summer* (2001), an untimely spoof of decades-old summer-camp movies, part of the pleasure of *They Came Together*, a pastiche of Nora Ephron-type romantic comedies, is in its datedness. When Wain and Showalter reheat material about pretentious coffee orders that even today's hackiest writers would think twice about using – "Boy, whatever happened to good old-fashioned coffee?" – only part of the joke is against fogeyish anti-latte quips. Wain and Showalter's audacious laziness is also in the mix, together with the shared cringe as the obvious punchline hoves into view well before it is delivered. Though the fourth wall is formally breached only once, at the very end, when Paul Rudd's character Joel leans over to tell us "I told ya it was gonna be a crazy day" (he didn't), the comic bathos of writers and performers setting out to mock conventions that have largely fallen into disuse is a constant presence between the lines.

The 21st century is occasionally acknowledged, as when Joel lamely echoes the people-watching scene in *Amie Hall* (1977) – "Look at this guy with his iPhone... probably going to the... Apple Store" – but on the whole Wain has lovingly recreated a tony Upper West Side neverland, in a world largely without internet – a pre-*You've Got Mail* (1998) world, perhaps. Amy Poehler's character Molly describes "browsing in my favourite used bookstore"; after a tiff, Joel looks at a slideshow of their relationship in his loft-style apartment; and heart-to-heart conversations are had on the steps of brownstone townhouses. The central conflict between Molly's independent (and totally uneconomic) sweetshop and Joel's monster candy corporation belongs to a time when you could bet on the latter. Molly more than once says that New York is "like another character" in the story, and in a roundabout way it is. Much of the comedy in *They Came Together* is deliberately on the nose, but Wain and Showalter are more subtle in sending up the fake specificity of this familiar cityscape – conjured up by the dropping of local but not too local references that total outsiders can grasp. The last lines are chatter about going to see an exhibition at the museum, which can be reached

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Adam Shankman
Jennifer Gibgot
Patrick Wachsberger
Erik Feig
Written by
John Swetnam
Based on characters created by
Duane Adler
Director of Photography
Brian Pearson
Editor
Niven Howie
Production Designer

Devorah Herbert
Music
Jeff Cardoni
Production Sound Mixer
Kelly Zombor
Costume Designer
Soyan An
Choreography
Jamal Sims
Christopher Scott
Dondraico Johnson
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Entertainment, LLC
Production

Companies
Summit
Entertainment presents an Offspring
production
Executive Producers
Jon M. Chu
David Nicksay
Scott Speer
Matthew Smith
Bob Hayward
David Garrett
Meredith Milton

CAST

Ryan Guzman
Sean
Briana Evigan
Andie
Misha Gabriel
Eddy
Stephen 'tWitch' Boss
Jason
Izabella Miko
Alexxa Brava
Alyson Stoner
Camille
Adam Sevani

Moose
Mari Koda
Jenny Kido
David 'Kid David' Shreibman
Chad
Chadd 'Madd' Chadd' Smith
Vladd
Facundo Lombard
Martin Lombard
The Santiago Twins
Luis 'Luigi' Rosado
Monster
Christopher Scott
Hair

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International
UK & Ire

Present-day US. Sean, leader of a struggling dance troupe, finds his crew abandoning their dream after a year of scraping by in Los Angeles. Desperate to make it, he decides to enter a tournament in Las Vegas; the grand prize is a three-year dance contract. He convinces his old friend Moose to help him gather a makeshift new crew, and together they head to

Vegas to compete. As Sean's crew emerge as dark-horse contenders, he discovers that the outcome of the competition, being staged by a well-known pop star, has been decided in advance. Nevertheless, the crew compete and their efforts prove so extraordinary that the judges forgo their plan and award them the prize.



Wrong-com: Paul Rudd, Amy Poehler

by the subway – “Only in New York, right?”

Not that all of it is that involved, or that dated: when Molly describes Joel as “handsome in a non-threatening way” and “just Jewish enough”, the Rudd persona developed in *Friends* springs to mind; in the same way, Joel’s description of Molly as “the kind of girl who will drive you a little crazy but you can’t help fall in love with” suggests her *Parks and Recreation* character Leslie Knope. (The sweetshop-versus-corporation plot resembles that of the 2008 Poehler–Tina Fey comedy *Baby Mama* as well as that of *You’ve Got Mail*.) Indeed, there is a sense in which *They Came Together*, in common with quite a large proportion of American comedy features at the moment, serves as ‘summer stock’ for sitcom performers. Apart from the two leads, there are supporting parts and cameos from the stars of *How I Met Your Mother* (Cobie Smulders), *New Girl* (Max Greenfield), *The Office* (Ellie Kemper, Ed Helms) and *30 Rock* (Jack McBrayer), among others. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Michael Showalter

Written by

Michael Showalter

David Wain

Director of

Photography

Tom Houghton

Editor

Jamie Gross

Production

Designer

Mark White

Music

Craig Wedren

Matt Novack

Production

Sound Mixer

Griffin Richardson

Costume Designer

Dana Covarrubias

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Films Inc.

Production

Companies

Lionsgate presents

a Lionsgate/

Showalter-Wain

production

With the support of

the New York State

Governor’s Office

for Motion Picture

and Television

Development

Executive

Producers

David Wain

Peter Principato

Paul Young

Matt Kaplan

Tony Hernandez

CAST

Paul Rudd

Joel

Amy Poehler

Molly

Cobie Smulders

Tiffany

Christopher Meloni

Roland

Max Greenfield

Jake

Bill Hader

Kyle

Ellie Kemper

Karen

Jason Mantzoukas

Bob

Melanie Lynskey

Brenda

Ed Helms

Eggbert

Michael Ian Black

Trevor

Michael Murphy

Roger

Kenan Thompson

Teddy

Jack McBrayer

Oliver

Ken Marino

Tommy

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor

Lionsgate UK

Manhattan, present day. Over dinner, Molly and Joel tell their married friends Kyle and Karen the history of their relationship, which, they say, resembles the plot of a corny romcom.

Molly runs an independent sweetshop, Upper Sweet Side; Joel works for the Candy Systems and Research corporation but dreams of opening a café. Initially antagonistic towards one another, they arrange to go on a date after a chance second meeting. All goes well at first but complications develop and Joel drifts back to his ex, Tiffany, while Molly starts seeing her accountant, Eggbert.

Joel, having realised the error of his ways, persuades his boss not to put Upper Sweet Side out of business, then arrives at Molly and Eggbert’s wedding to beg her to reconsider – only to find that she has jilted Eggbert of her own accord. Joel leads the wedding party to the Brooklyn Heights Promenade, where Molly once told him she would go in such a situation. Reunited with Molly, Joel opens a café as a concession in Upper Sweet Side.

At the end of the dinner it is revealed that Joel and Molly are divorced; however, they decide to make another go of it.

Think like a Man Too

USA 2014

Director: Tim Story

Certificate 12A 105m 40s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

Think like a Man, released in 2012, set itself the task of finding a dramatic container for the wisdom of American comedian/self-proclaimed relationship expert Steve Harvey. Harvey’s thesis, first aired in his bestseller *Act like a Lady, Think like a Man*, seemed to be that black women must exercise a series of manipulative strategies in order to force men to marry them and, with luck, buy them a house. ‘Gender essentialism’ is too kind a label for Harvey’s teachings, which unintentionally propose that men and women exist to make each other miserable and that this is normal, even desirable.

The sequel is less of an overtly didactic experience, reuniting the personality-free ensemble cast of the first film for a wedding in Las Vegas, with Kevin Hart’s voiceover relentlessly emphasising the city’s touristic desirability (the tourism board was heavily involved). The main plot requires Michael (Terrence J) to stand up to his overbearing mother Loretta (Jennifer Lewis) in defence of fiancée Candace (Regina Hall); other relationship struggles include Zeke (Romany Malco) trying to convince bride-to-be Mya (Meagan Good) that his philandering ‘Zeke the Freak’ days are behind him, while the sex sessions that Kristen (Gabrielle Union) regularly schedules in the hope of becoming pregnant leave husband Jeremy (Jerry Ferrara) feeling oppressed. Much grovelling is required for resolution, as well as many dramatic gestures; comic interludes include a male-stripper sequence presumably inspired by *Magic Mike*’s recent success.

A general state of unhappiness is again normal and desirable, and at the end lessons are learnt, as spelt out by Kevin Hart in his narration. The sequel is wan where the original was hateful, which is some kind of improvement. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Will Packer

Written by

Keith Merryman

David A. Newman

Based upon the

book *Act like a Lady,*

Think like a Man

by Steve Harvey

Director of

Photography

Chris Duskin

Editor

Peter S. Elliot

Production

Designer

Chris Cornwell

Music

Christopher

Lennertz

Production

Sound Mixer

Douglas Axtell

Costume Designer

Salvador Perez

©Screen Gems, Inc.

Production

Companies

Screen Gems

presents in

association with

Lstar Capital

A Will Packer

Productions

production

A film by Tim Story

Executive

Producers

Keith Merryman

David A. Newman

Glenn S. Gainer

Ben Waisbren

Steve Harvey

Rushion McDonald

Rob Hardy

CAST

Adam Brody

Isaac

Michael Ealy

Dominic

Jerry Ferrara

Jeremy

Meagan Good

Mya

Regina Hall

Candace

Dennis Haysbert

Uncle Eddie

Taraji P. Henson

Lauren

Terrence J

Michael

Jennifer Lewis

Loretta

Romany Malco

Zeke

Wendi McLendon-

Covey

Tish

Gary Owen

Bennett

Gabrielle Union

Kristen

David Walton

Terrell

Kevin Hart

Cedric

La La Anthony

Sonia

Jim Piddock

Declan

Wendy Williams

Gail

Caleel Harris

Duke

Dolby Digital/Datsat

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Sony Pictures

Releasing

20,000 Days on Earth

United Kingdom/USA/Canada 2014

Directors: Iain Forsyth, Jane Pollard

Certificate 15 97m 29s

See Feature
on page 26

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

In this feature-length portrait, Nick Cave recalls the teenage days when he’d pore over LP covers projecting himself into the stellar personae

of favourite artists. Now, of course, amid an ongoing recording and touring career that has lasted more than three decades, he’s become something of an object of veneration himself, having assembled a prolific body of work whose lyrical concerns put a very personal spin on the old blues terrain of sex, death and religion (and all points inbetween). The ‘vinyl revival’ notwithstanding, today’s dreamy wannabes are less likely to be mesmerised by album or CD artwork, and perhaps instead gaze on their idols through the now established medium of the advertorial arts doc, where an artist allows the cameras a peek at their creative process, sundry pundits and collaborators fill out the context, and with luck the result boasts enough journalistic integrity to sit beside the project’s value as a promotional tool.

Directors Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard come from an art-world background but here display a grasp of the advertorial form long familiar on TV. Delivering intimate footage of Cave at home, in the studio and on stage, they eavesdrop on an encounter with his shrink, follow his discussions with the archivists bravely trying to catalogue the detritus of his drug-fogged earlier career, and pepper the whole thing with pop-up appearances from key cohorts – actor Ray Winstone, guitarist Blixa Bargeld and pop icon Kylie Monogue (whose duet with him gave Cave his closest encounter with the mainstream). Accompanied by a valuable ruminative voiceover from Cave himself, pondering the interconnectedness of his many narrative songs, the whole artefact offers a fascinating portrait of an artist and performer with a relentless drive to create. There is, however, one tantalising notion that differentiates all this from business-as-usual muso fare on BBC4, for while Forsyth and Pollard seem to be offering an authentic rendering of Cave at work and play, their film is so atmospherically staged and beautifully woven together that it might just be too good to be true. Is there, in fact, any way to tell reality from fabrication in these evocative, alluring frames?

Of course, there’s obvious artifice involved in Kylie happily pitching up in the back seat of Cave’s car, or the way this ostensible day-in-the-life traverses space and time by intercutting live and studio performances from hither and yon. But when Cave glides the length of an impossibly green lawn adjoining what we presume to be his own white-walled mansion, the atmosphere is so utterly dreamlike that it transcends the bounds of *vérité*. Similar frissons abound, such as the visit to a supposed Cave archive that’s like something out of a Harry Palmer movie, or indeed the too-perfect idyll of lunch with resplendently bearded bandmate Warren Ellis in a fairytale cottage overlooking the white cliffs of Dover. Yet if these oneiric moments give us pause for thought, should we be questioning everything else we see? Is that Cave’s actual shrink? Does the very convincing Cave archive really exist? It almost feels like a plot spoiler to reveal that both are



Portrait of an artist: Nick Cave

constructs, since Cave apparently met leading Freudian analyst Darian Leader for the first time on the day of filming, and there is a Cave archive but it's at the Melbourne Arts Centre and not in his adopted Brighton. On screen, though, Forsyth and Pollard give absolutely nothing away, since the ramifications of not quite knowing what you're looking at are the point and the pleasure of this exercise in mystique.

Given that Cave himself ponders whether he's now become trapped in the rock-star image he's projected himself into, doomed forever to tread the boards in his gold-lamé shirt knocking 'em dead, it's tempting to read the film as a sort of walk-in projection of that self-image, in which actual veracity is less of an issue than the shared collusion of artist and audience. In their series of 14 short films *Do You Love Me Like I Love You*, Forsyth and Pollard gathered colleagues and fans to hold forth on Cave's albums, thus positing the

extensive discography's hold on the communal imagination. Cave himself didn't contribute to that project, but here he puts his side of the story. The result succeeds on many levels, as a primer on Cave for those new to the party, as a fan souvenir boasting full-on performances of the best material from his latest *Push the Sky Away* album, and as a teasing, artful offering for aesthetes intrigued by the fluid relationship between artist, audience and marketplace.

Intelligently conceived and exquisitely crafted, it's also still on some level a promotional tool, and a product of Cave the sometime diary-keeper's dedicated self-regard. Whether that hint of narcissism or the commercial element involved takes some shine off the film's artistic achievement is one for debate, but Cave's writing credit suggests this is how he wants to present himself, and judging by the fierce-willed individual on display here, he's not one to be argued with. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

James Wilson

Dan Bowen

Written by

Iain Forsyth

Jane Pollard

Nick Cave

Director of

Photography

Erik Wilson

Editor

Jonathan Amos

Production Designer

Simon Rogers

Music

Nick Cave

Warren Ellis

Sound Recordist

Kevin Paul

©Pulse Films Ltd/

British Film Institute/

Channel Four

Television Corporation

Production

Companies

Film4, Corniche

Pictures, Pulse Films

and British Film

Institute present in

association with Phi

Films and Goldin

Films a Pulse Films/

JW Films production

Made with the

support of the

BFI's Film Fund

Executive Producers

Thomas Benski

Lucas Ochoa

Anna Higgs

Tabitha Jackson

Hani Farsi

Phoebe Greenberg

Penny Mancuso

Paul Goldin

Paul Grindey

Film Extracts

Walkabout (1970)

La Passion de Jeanne

d'Arc/The Passion of

Joan of Arc (1928)

The Road to God

Knows Where (1990)

Ghosts... Of the

Civil Dead (1988)

The Proposition

(2005)

Scarface (1983)

[audio only]

Der Himmel über

Berlin/Wings of

Desire (1987)

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Picturehouse

Entertainment

Video screens chart the passage of time towards musician and writer Nick Cave's 20,000th day on earth. The scenes that follow play out like a behind-the-scenes documentary, as Cave drives around Brighton between several significant appointments and is visited by key collaborators (actor Ray Winstone, guitarist Blixa Bargeld, singer Kylie Minogue). Cave muses on the ongoing creation of a huge body of narrative songs, spending an hour on the couch of psychoanalyst Darian Leader, who questions him on

his earliest sexual experiences and memories of his late father. Cave then lunches with band member Warren Ellis, discussing the transformative aspects of performance. He also visits an archive collection of his past paraphernalia to answer questions from the curators. He returns home to see his two sons and partner Susie, but thoughts of the road and the lure of performance are never far away. Footage of Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds in the recording studio and in performance fill out this film portrait.

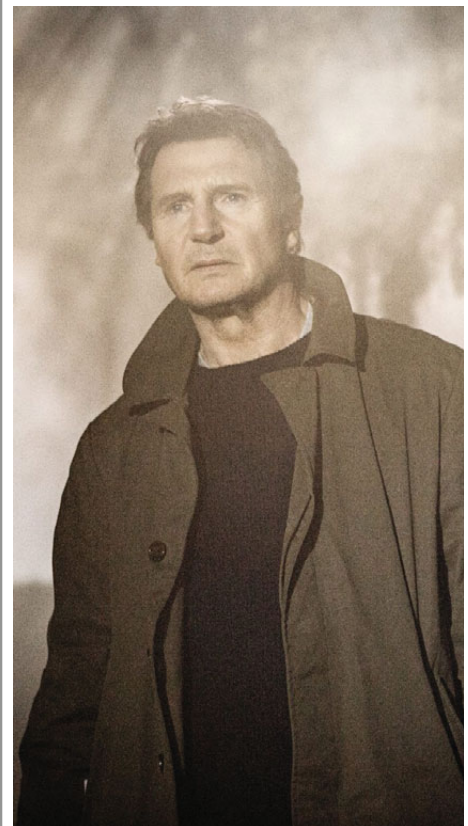
A Walk Among the Tombstones

Director: Scott Frank

Reviewed by Demetrios Matheou

There are reasons to be hopeful about this adaptation of Lawrence Sanders's tenth novel featuring ex-cop and private eye Matthew Scudder: the fact that it's adapted by Scott Frank, who did such a terrific job with another purveyor of hardboiled, character-driven crime, Elmore Leonard, in *Get Shorty* (1995) and *Out of Sight* (1998); the possibility of seeing Liam Neeson inject something new into his preferred current mode of action hero; and a fresh foray down some mean streets. But the film doesn't deliver enough on any of these fronts. Though it's competently made, its efficiency becomes tiresome as we watch one genre trope after another ticked off, without producing either dramatic frisson or the delight of those Leonard films.

Although *Tombstones* is well into the series of Scudder novels, Frank touches base with his hero's origins. A prologue introduces an enjoyably unexpected Neeson: with full-length coat, lank long hair, wispy goatee and boozy swagger, Scudder circa 1991 is more gunslinger than cop. Sitting in a bar with a coffee and two whisky chasers, he's someone we'd like to follow for the next 90 minutes. Unfortunately, the plot quickly moves forward eight years. Having lost his job and his family, the new Scudder has cleaned up his act and Neeson has returned to his all too familiar persona – clean-cut, straight-talking in that gravelly, reassuring voice, tough but essentially decent; the actor is as watchable as ever, but there's too much irony when his character is told, "Amish got more flavour than you do." For all the AA meetings and the self-consciously slow reveal of what happened to make him quit the force, there's no edge to him at all.



Graveyard shift: Liam Neeson

Watermark

Canada/Germany 2013

Directors: Jennifer Baichwal, Edward Burtynsky

Certificate U 90m 46s

Reviewed by Sukhdev Sandhu

Water. It's above us, under us, all around us. It's even inside us. How to start thinking about it? The artist Roni Horn, in her book of photographs *Another Water* about parts of the Thames where men and women had jumped to their deaths, asked: "What do you know about water? That it's everywhere, so familiar-seeming and yet so elusive (a kind of everything without definition), never quite graspable, even as an ice cube?" Water is a thing. It's spatial too. But it's also a portal, a vagrant time-machine. There's an African saying: "We don't go to water ponds merely to capture water, but because friends and dreams are there to meet us."

Watermark, the latest collaboration between photographer Edward Burtynsky and documentarian Jennifer Baichwal, is a partial elaboration of these conceptual challenges. Their previous film, 2006's *Manufactured Landscapes*, was set in China and was obsessed with questions of size and scale: the epic dimensions of the country's modern factories; the destruction of more than 1,300 villages and the displacement of more than a million people by the Three Gorges Dam; the emerging phenomenon of cities devoted to handling and repurposing digital waste expelled by western countries.

The new film is a global travelogue in which Burtynsky, who doesn't appear on screen very often, explores his fascination with the ways in which water affects human and humans affect water. It visits sites – some sacred, others soiled – in India, Bangladesh, Greenland, China, America, British Columbia – and portrays water as a source of livelihood, a form of ontology, a disappearing resource. It is more cinematic compendium than film essay, and its closing credits reveal that *Watermark* was not only shot and edited without a traditional script, but that it had an 11-month offline edit and a shooting ratio of 150:1. For a film that so clearly deplores the wastage of water in the Global North, it seems odd to be so boastful of its own supersized construction.

Exquisitely framed and photographed by Nicholas de Pencier, *Watermark* is at its best when it trades in image-making. It begins with a mysterious and terrifying shot of something brown and grey, something that might be an abstract representation of a pack of bears tearing through a medieval forest, or perhaps a Turner-esque storm, but which, as the camera slowly zooms out, proves to be silt water gushing from a Chinese dam project. There are



The life aquatic: *Watermark*

startling aerial shots of the Ogallala Aquifer, an underwater reservoir that supports farming in a number of American states, which leave the ground below looking like an artist's palette.

It's possible that some viewers will feel uncomfortable at Baichwal and Burtynsky's genius for the industrial and post-industrial sublime. The film certainly isn't aimed as any kind of activist intervention. For the most part it shows the politics of water as something the world's poorest people experience rather than fight against. One sequence depicts the massive amount of water used by Bangladeshi textile factories making garments for western consumers, and includes a shot of chemical effluence flowing into a local river where children bathe; it's troubling for sure, but it leaves the Bangladeshis looking quiescent and helpless.

An alternative approach was evident in Anand Patwardhan's *A Narmada Diary* (1995), which chronicled indigenous campaigns against a dam in western India, as well as in Paromita Vohra's *Q2P* (2006), a documentary about toilets in Mumbai that showed how slum-dwellers often hack the city's water system to feed their families. Nothing would have been lost aesthetically – and much would have been gained politically – by travelling to countries such as Bolivia, where popular coalitions have successfully waged war against US companies hungry to implement water-privatisation schemes.

Watermark would have profited from sharper editing or a bolder thesis. Its final sections are a whirl of airline-advertisement-style images of kids frolicking on beaches, slo-mo shots and time-lapse coverage of dams. Nonetheless, it's a handsome primer for anyone at an early stage of becoming educated about hydropeotics. Ⓢ

What follows fits the template that involves a no-nonsense gumshoe surrounded by colourful characters: the psychopathic kidnappers with their twisted techniques; the creepy cemetery chap (played by Olafur Darri Olafsson, who has proven credentials to chill after his role in *True Detective*); the boy who aspires to be a child detective. These characters work well enough, as does Block's idea of the victims being chosen through their association with drug kingpins, which brings some of noir's moral grey to proceedings; there's a nice touch when a dealer, short of the ransom money, wonders aloud whether the kidnappers might accept the 50 kilos of product he has lying around. But it all feels too neat. The scenes of pouring rain, the flashbacks and the private eye's customary beating are by-the-numbers. The problem is Frank's role not as writer but as director. *Out of Sight* had Soderbergh. In contrast, Frank has just one other feature to his name, *The Lookout* (2007), and the inexperience results here in a film that is good-looking but only intermittently engaging. That said, Scudder has brought a much more accomplished director to heel: Hal Ashby was made to look mediocre by *8 Million Ways to Die* in 1986. So we could always throw the book at the PI. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Danny DeVito
Michael Shamberg
Stacey Sher
Tobin Armbrust
Brian Oliver

Written for the screen by

Scott Frank
Based on the novel by Lawrence Block

Director of Photography

Mihai Malaimare Jr
Edited by
Guy East

Production Designer

David Brisbin

Music

Carlos Rafael Rivera

Sound

Michael Barosky

Costume Designer

Betsy Heimann

Production Companies

Exclusive Media
presents in
association with
Cross Creek Pictures
a Jersey Films/
Double Feature
Film production

Executive Producers

Nigel Sinclair
Guy East
Kerry Orent
Lauren Selig
Mark Mallouk
Richard Toussaint
Adi Shankar
Spencer Silna
Tracy Krohn
Kate Bacon
John Hyde

CAST

Liam Neeson
Matt Scudder
Dan Stevens
Kenny Kristo
David Harbour
Ray
Sebastian Roché
Yuri Landau
Boyd Holbrook
Ruth Wilson

Datasat

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor

EI Films

New York City, 1999. Matt Scudder is a former policeman and recovering alcoholic; he left the police force eight years earlier after accidentally killing a girl during a drunken shootout. He now works as an unlicensed private detective.

Heroine trafficker Kenny Kristo employs him to track down the men who kidnapped and murdered his wife despite receiving the ransom money. Scudder discovers that the two men have committed similar crimes before, targeting drug dealers' partners and horribly mutilating and killing them. During his investigations he interviews Loogan, a groundskeeper at a cemetery where one of the bodies was found; Loogan admits to once being the killers' accomplice, before committing suicide. Scudder befriends a young homeless boy, T.J. Another dealer reveals that his daughter has been kidnapped. This time, Scudder negotiates with the kidnappers, ensuring that the girl is alive before the money is delivered, at the cemetery. After the girl is freed, there is a gunfight from which the kidnappers escape. With T.J.'s help, Scudder and Kristo follow the men to their house. One of the kidnappers kills both his partner and Kristo before Scudder shoots him.

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Nicholas de Pencier

Writer

Jennifer Baichwal

Director of Photography

Nicholas de Pencier

Editing

Roland Schlimme

Original Music

Martin Tielli

Location Sound

Roland Schlimme

Recording

Nicholas de Pencier

©Sixth Wave

Productions Inc.

Production Companies

Presenting partner:
Scotiabank
Produced with
the participation
of SKION, Ontario
Media Development
Corporation, Canada

Media Fund, Rogers

Documentary Fund

Produced in

association with

Movie Network,

Movie Central

Produced with the

assistance of Shaw
Media, Hot Docs,

Ontario Media

Development

Corporation,

Canadian Film or

Video Production

Tax Credit

Executive Producers

Edward Burtynsky
Dabiel Iron

In Colour

[1.78:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Soda Pictures

A documentary following photographer Edward Burtynsky as he works on a project exploring the role that water plays in our lives – in infrastructure schemes, offering employment to millions of people, and as something that prompts us to contemplate questions of time and identity. The film illustrates

these issues by visiting, among other places, a dam in China, a desert where the Colorado River used to flow, and a floating abalone farm off China's Fujian coast. We also see a religious festival in Allahabad involving 30 million people bathing in the Ganges, and a surfing contest on America's West Coast.

What We Did on Our Holiday

United Kingdom 2014
Directors: Andy Hamilton, Guy Jenkin
Certificate 12A 95m 17s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

"I'm really pissed off with this dying," grumbles 75-year-old Gordie McLeod (Billy Connolly), stricken with terminal cancer. Given that Connolly has made no secret of his own current tussles with cancer and Parkinson's disease, the line acquires added poignancy. Not that *What We Did on Our Holiday*, for all it deals with divorce, death and dysfunctional families, is by any means a downer; if anything, it's perhaps too much the reverse. But, at least until the last ten minutes, the film offers generous helpings of the kind of lively, leftfield, cross-generational humour familiar from the BBC TV series *Outnumbered*. Not surprisingly, since this marks the feature debut of the creators of the series, joint writer/directors Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin.

The running joke of the series was that the parents, constantly trying to assert moral control and superior wisdom, were invariably outmanoeuvred by the impervious reasonings of their children – and so it goes here. In the film, the odds are tipped further against the adults in that they've split up and are at constant loggerheads over the divorce ("We're not arguing, we're discussing," they insist unconvincingly), making it all the easier for the kids to play one off against the other. As with *Outnumbered*, the adult actors stick largely to the script, but much of the children's dialogue is improvised. Hamilton and Jenkin's technique, as the production notes explain, "is focused on getting the kids to relax and to understand that nothing that they do is wrong. The only lines they definitely need to deliver are short, succinct moments from the script. Anything else is regarded as a bonus."

The approach lends itself to a fresh, naturalistic feel that keeps the comedy light and buoyant, even when dealing with questions of mortality. Connolly, his sense of spontaneity honed by years of stand-up, interacts especially well with the kids, mischievously delighting them with bawdy songs or introducing them to such unfamiliar concepts as lesbianism; but all the relationships, within as well as across the generations, feel convincing. There's a sparky chemistry between David Tennant and Rosamund Pike, as divorcing parents Doug and Abi McLeod, that makes them wholly credible as a couple who at once love and exasperate each other. Ben Miller as Doug's smug control-freak brother Gavin, busily micro-managing Gordie's birthday party, is the most caricatured but also gets some of the best lines. "Margaret," he chides his put-upon wife (Amelia Bullmore), "there's a wrong apostrophe on the toilet signage!" Trying to satisfy the kids' curiosity over why he's so rich and has such a big house, he explains that he's not a banker but a 'short-seller'. Six-year-old Mickey gazes at him in bewilderment. "You sell shorts?"

Each of the three children is given a besetting quirk but – as any parent can attest – they all feel likely enough. Jess (Harriet Turnbull), at four the youngest, insists on taking a rock called Eric and a half-breezeblock called Norman everywhere with her; she also has a kleptomaniac appetite for bunches of keys. Nine-year-old Lottie (Emilia Jones) solemnly keeps a notebook in which she records her feelings, along with "a list of the lies we're going to tell". Mickey (Bobby



Postcard from purgatory: David Tennant, Rosamund Pike

Smallldridge) is fascinated by the god Odin and everything to do with the Vikings, a fixation that – in a crucial plot point – he shares with his grandfather Gordie. Another running gag carried over from *Outnumbered* is that the children, even the youngest of them, are often more mature and responsible than their parents. Dozing off at the wheel on the motorway heading for Scotland, Doug awakens in horror, only to find Jess sitting beside him, calmly steering the car.

A subplot sees Gavin's reluctant violin-prodigy son find love (or at least some enthusiastic snogging) with a pretty violinist from the folk band brought in for Gordie's party. Martin Hawkins (also DP on the TV series) captures

the action with practised flexibility while shamelessly luxuriating in the glorious Scottish maritime scenery. *Holiday* only disintegrates in its final ten minutes, where the imperative of a feelgood ending causes the film to plunge headlong into a morass of implausible reconciliations. Difficulties are magically smoothed away, legal snags overcome, ominous figures (notably Celia Imrie's hovering social-services snoop) turn suddenly benign and everything ends with a joyous communal romp on the beach. A pity, since up to that point the film has sustained an appealing balance of moods, tempering its comic elements with occasional darker intimations. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
David M. Thompson
Dan Winch

Written by
Andy Hamilton
Guy Jenkin

Director of Photography
Martin Hawkins

Editors
Steve Tempia
Mark Williams

Production Designer
Pat Campbell

Music
Alex Jeffes

Supervising Sound Editor
Keith Nixon

Costume Designer
Rhona Russell

©Origin Pictures (Our Holiday) Limited/
British Broadcasting Corporation
Production Companies
BBC Films presents in association with Creative Scotland and Lipsync Productions an Origin Pictures production

With the support of the MEDIA programme of the European Union
Produced by Backwell Productions Limited
Supported by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland
Developed in association with BBC Films
Executive Producers
Christine Langan
Zygi Kamasa
Andrew Orr
Norman Merry
Peter Hampden
James Eyre
Film Extracts
The Vikings (1958)

CAST

Rosamund Pike
Abi McLeod
David Tennant
Doug McLeod
Ben Miller
Gavin McLeod
Amelia Bullmore
Margaret
Billy Connolly

Gordon McLeod,
'Gordie'
Annette Crosbie
Doreen
Celia Imrie
Agnes Chisolm
Lewis Davie
Kenneth, 'Kenny'
Emilia Jones
Lottie McLeod
Bobby Smallldridge
Mickey McLeod
Harriet Turnbull
Jess McLeod

In Colour
[L78:1]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

Present-day London. Doug and Abi McLeod and their children Lottie, Mickey and Jess prepare to drive to Scotland for Doug's father Gordon's 75th birthday celebrations. Doug and Abi have separated and are planning to divorce, but they ask the kids not to mention this to Gordon, who's dying of cancer. After a fraught drive they arrive to find Doug's control-freak brother Gavin masterminding the birthday party and ordering around his neurotic wife Margaret and their teenage son Kenny. Doug and Gavin soon clash, as do Doug and Abi when he discovers that she's planning to accept a job in Newcastle and take the children with her. Fed up with all the arguments, Gordon decides to take the children to his favourite beach.

Gordon, who's well aware of Doug and Abi's marital problems, half-jokingly tells the children that he'd like a Viking funeral with nobody arguing. He dies on the beach. Lottie runs back to the house but finds the adults still at loggerheads; she returns, and the three agree to carry out Gordon's wishes. They improvise a raft, set his body alight and push him out to sea. Back at the house, with party guests starting to arrive, the children tell the adults what they've done. The adults try to hush it up but the news gets out and the next day the press arrive en masse. Forced to present a united front, the family resolve their differences; they see off the reporters, mollify the child-protection services and hold a small private party on the beach in Gordon's memory.

Wilde Salomé

USA 2011
Director: Al Pacino

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

Wilde Salomé is the outermost layer of a Chinese boxes-type experiment by actor-turned-director Al Pacino; a multi-layered attempt to get at the heart of Oscar Wilde's 19th-century play *Salomé*, which was banned from the English stage. It serves as a companion piece to *Salomé* (also released this month, reviewed on page 84), a dramatic filming of the play directed by and starring Pacino and shot during a run of performances at LA's Wadsworth Theatre. The trials Pacino faced during the making of the film and the difficulties of doubling as actor and director across two different media are, along with his deep fascination with the play and playwright, the amalgamated subject of this eccentric documentary, which may blind an audience to its untidiness by the unparalleled access it provides to its famous star.

The film has much in common, in shape, with Pacino's directorial debut *Looking for Richard* (1996), which explored the enduring appeal of the works of Shakespeare through *Richard III*, and which featured Pacino both as himself and as the play's eponymous villain. Nearly 20 years later, Pacino uses the same approach for his latest passion, a tragedy about obsession that he believes to be a key text in understanding Wilde's homosexuality and its part in his demise in a Paris hotel at the age of 46. In Wilde's spellbinding play *Salomé*, Pacino plays Herod the Tetrarch; he is stepfather to the title character, who orders the beheading of her beloved Jokanaan when he proves impervious to her ardent attempts at seduction. Dispersed excerpts from the drama form the backbone of this otherwise unruly documentary, which springs back and forth from behind-the-scenes views of the LA stage performance to an unnamed desert location and further afield to Wilde's birthplace in Ireland.

Would Wilde have liked this film? Absolutely not – not the way it looks, anyway. Renowned for his flamboyant and fashionable appearance, he would surely have questioned – or laughed at – the film's dramatic reconstructions of pivotal scenes from his life. Made up like Michael



A woman of importance: Jessica Chastain

Douglas's Liberace in *Behind the Candelabra* (2013), Pacino re-enacts Wilde's response on hearing the news of his arrest for gross indecency. Seated in a silk armchair in a mock-Victorian parlour, the ageing Pacino looks frankly ridiculous, the setting like Madame Tussauds meets the National Trust. But the interlude is chastened by Pacino's concessionary, conspiratorial humour to-camera: "Me? As Oscar Wilde? Can you imagine?"

Indeed, there isn't much that can dampen the director's sense of fun, nor his delight at being ensconced in the life of his personal hero. His jolly self-parody is a vital part of the film's tonal register – when reading the local headlines heralding his comeback before the opening night of the play, for example, he groans: "This is the problem with my whole life!" It's this, instead, that Wilde may have warmed to, as well as the generosity of the actor's interactions with his public.

Ultimately, *Wilde Salomé* works only in conjunction with the complementary *Salomé* and doesn't educate beyond what's commonly known of Ireland's celebrated literary export. An enjoyable and infectious reconnaissance, it's best in its broaching of the complex rapport – the "lock[ing] souls" – of actor and playwright; a business that Pacino is more than qualified to vouch for. 

Wish I Was Here

USA 2014
Director: Zach Braff
Certificate 15 106m 38s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"What are we doing here?" "As parents, or on Earth?" "Can I say both?"

This exchange between middle-aged, unemployed father of two Aidan Bloom (Zach Braff) and his supportive wife Sarah (Kate Hudson) encapsulates the way that Braff (as director/co-writer) teases broader spiritual and existential themes from the family dramedy of *Wish I Was Here*. This is Braff's second feature, although its title would have served just as well for his first – in fact called *Garden State* (2004) – whose protagonist Andrew Largeman (also played by Braff) was an overmedicated, out-of-work actor, returning to New Jersey for his mother's funeral and eventually resolving some persistent, damaging issues with the overbearing father he'd been avoiding for years.

Aidan may be a good ten years older than Andrew, his mother may be long dead and his father Gabe (an effortlessly scene-stealing Mandy Patinkin) may be slowly succumbing to cancer, but Aidan, like Andrew, is an out-of-work LA actor who shares the younger man's sense of purposelessness and absence, and is in search of reconnection with both his roots and himself. In other words, *Wish I Was Here* has the feel of a decade-later catch-up sequel to *Garden State*, where only the names have been changed. The big difference is that Aidan also has a brother, Noah (Josh Gad) – a big lost boy who, like Andrew in *Garden State*, has distanced himself from his disappointed, forbidding father. The whiff of autobiographical influence here is enhanced by the knowledge that Braff co-wrote the screenplay with his real brother Adam, and that both were, like the siblings in the film, raised within a Jewish orthodoxy that they subsequently rejected.

There are other kinds of autobiography at work here. By now a successful actor/director, Braff courted controversy by raising more than \$3 million for this latest production via a Kickstarter campaign rather than by, say, putting up his own money or finding studio investment. Normally this would be nothing more than production tittle-tattle – except that Braff chooses to reflect the funding issue within the 



This man's life: Kate Hudson, Zach Braff

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Barry Navidi
Robert Fox
Written by
Al Pacino
Based on Oscar
Wilde's play *Salomé*
Director of
Photography
Benoît Delhomme
Edited by
Roberto Silvi
David Leonard
Art Directors
Nicole Ruby

Cassandra Fuote
Music Composed by
Jeff Beal
Sound Mixers
Stacy Hill
Marcus Ricaut
Costume Designers
Shukkan Hue
Annie Prager

©Salomé
Productions LLC
Production
Companies
Chal Productions

presents a Barry
Navidi/Robert
Fox production
An Al Pacino film
In association with
Salomé Productions
LLC, Stone Lock
Pictures
Executive Producers
George Ann Mason
Sakiko Yamada
Beni Atoori
Reza Rashidian
Andrea Grano
Amy Niederlander

Daryl Roth
Giulia Marletta
Tony Schiena
Film Extracts
Wilde (1997)
Forgotten Silver
(1996)

WITH

Jessica Chastain
Salomé, Princess
of Judea
Al Pacino
King Herod, 'the

Tetrarch, stepfather
to Salomé
Kevin Anderson
John the Baptist,
'Jokanaan', cousin
of Jesus
Roxanne Hart
Queen Herodias,
mother of Salomé

and
Estelle Parsons
Merlin Holland
Gore Vidal
Tom Stoppard

In 2006, Al Pacino stars in Estelle Parsons's stage production of Oscar Wilde's early play 'Salomé' at the Wadsworth Theatre in Los Angeles. During the run, Pacino films the play with the same company of actors.

This documentary follows the performance and filming of the play, and also examines Pacino's admiration for Wilde. It includes behind-the-scenes footage both of the play – from first rehearsal to opening night – and the film shoot. Pacino and contributors including Tom Stoppard and Gore Vidal discuss Wilde's socialist-communist politics, his homosexuality, his

relationship with his wife and children and his love affair with – and ultimate betrayal by – Lord Alfred Douglas, son of the Marquess of Queensberry. Pacino visits Wilde's birthplace in Dublin, his London home and the Paris hotel where he died. In period costume, and with a different cast of actors, Pacino reconstructs episodes from Wilde's life, including the aftermath of the libel suit he brought against Queensberry, which ultimately led to his arrest for gross indecency and his imprisonment. Pacino also reads excerpts from Wilde's poems, and lengthy passages from the filmed play 'Salomé' are included.

drama of the film itself. When an ailing Gabe can no longer afford the fees for his grandchildren's Jewish private school, Aidan goes cap in hand to the school's chief rabbi asking for *tzedakah* – charity – only to be told that *tzedakah* is for those in real need, not for “some schmuck who's decided to be an actor”. Indeed, Aidan's insolvency, like his general habit of carrying around the family swear jar as his chief source of cash, becomes a recurrent motif.

Perhaps Braff succeeds in showing imperfect everymen as the heroes of their own family sagas precisely because the flaws of these likeable fraternal nebbishes never run particularly deep, or maybe it is because the ‘real’ challenge they must face – their father's passing – is made infinitely easier by an idealised, aestheticised deathbed scene. Ultimately a high tolerance for mawkishness will be needed to love *Wish I Was Here* – but along the way there are some very funny lines if perhaps no divine revelation. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Stacey Sher
Michael Shamburg
Zach Braff
Adam Braff
Written by
Zach Braff
Adam Braff
Director of Photography
Lawrence Sher
Edited by
Myron Kerstein
Production Designer
Tony Fanning
Music
Rob Simonsen
Sound Mixer
David Alvarez
Costume Designer
Betsy Heilmann

©WIWH Productions, LLC and Worldview Entertainment
Capital LLC
Production Companies
Worldview Entertainment
presents a Double

Feature Films/ Second Stix Films production
Executive Producers
Christopher Woodrow
Molly Connors
Maria Cestone
Sarah E. Johnson
Hoyt David Morgan

CAST

Zach Braff
Aidan Bloom
Donald Faison
Anthony
Josh Gad
Noah Bloom
Pierce Gagnon
Tucker Bloom
Ashley Greene
Janine
Kate Hudson
Sarah Bloom
Joey King
Grace Bloom
Jim Parsons
Paul
Mandy Patinkin
Gabe Bloom

Michael Weston
Jerry

Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Koch Media

LA, present day. Aidan Bloom is an unemployed actor and househusband. His wife Sarah works in an office, where she has to endure the inappropriate conduct of her colleague Jerry. When Aidan's father Gabe reveals that he is dying from cancer and can no longer afford the fees for his grandchildren Tucker and Grace to attend an orthodox Jewish private school, Aidan – who has traumatic memories of being bullied in state school – reluctantly agrees to home-school them. Aidan discovers a talent for teaching life lessons, and discusses epiphanies and mortality with his children during a camping trip in the desert. As Gabe's health deteriorates, Aidan tries to persuade his feckless brother Noah to visit their father and patch things up with him, but Noah can't stand Gabe's disapproval and is busy trying to attract his geeky neighbour Janine with an elaborately designed costume for Comic-Con. Aidan gives fellow actor Paul some tips at an audition. En route to Gabe's deathbed, Aidan confronts Jerry and is floored by a punch. Aidan, Sarah, Grace and Tucker are by Gabe's side as he slips away, and Noah turns up at the last minute to be congratulated by Gabe for winning the Comic-Con costume competition. Paul gets Aidan a college job teaching acting.

You and the Night

France 2013
Director: Yann Gonzalez
Certificate m s

Reviewed by Alex Davidson

Yann Gonzalez's feature debut premiered alongside *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* and *Stranger by the Lake* at Cannes last year, making up an extraordinary trio of French LGBT cinema; the other two films edged it out of the running for the Queer Palm but it later made *Cahiers du cinéma*'s top ten of 2013.

Gonzalez has referred to *The Breakfast Club* (1985) as an inspiration, and *You and the Night* acts as a perverted flipside to John Hughes's film, gleefully swapping characters such as ‘the Athlete’ and ‘the Princess’ for ‘the Slut’ and ‘the Stud’. As midnight approaches (the more poetic French title is *Les Rencontres d'après minuit*), a handsome couple, Ali and Matthias, and their transgender maid Udo prepare for an orgy. Each guest tells their sad story, but when the hosts reveal their own tragic history, the plot veers off into another reality. As in Hughes's film, the characters shed their types to show the vulnerable being underneath, albeit with calm melancholy rather than fist-punching elation. The film pulsates with an 80s aesthetic, and poaches its opening dream sequence from Alain Robbe-Grillet's *La Belle Captive* (1983). Gonzalez plunders from the 70s too – pop references to camp gothic appear throughout, from the vaguely *Rocky Horror* set-up to the Star's glittery dress, stolen, perhaps, from the countess in *Daughters of Darkness* (1971).

An early scene of resuscitation through masturbation gives the first hint of the supernatural, and ultimately it is unclear in which realm the action takes place. Like Xavier Dolan, whose only dud, *Laurence Anyways* (2012), also has a trans protagonist, Gonzalez occasionally loses sight of the story in favour of pretty actors looking fabulous against neon-lit backdrops, but by the end he steers away from self-indulgence through emotional conviction. The sighing, gorgeous score is supplied by M83 (whose frontman, Anthony Gonzalez, is the director's brother).

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Cécile Vacheret
Written by
Yann Gonzalez
Director of Photography
Simon Beaufils
Editor
Raphaël Lefèvre
Art Director
Sidney Dubois
Original Music
M83
Sound
Jean-Barthélémy Velay
Damien Boitel
Xavier Thieulin
Costume Designer
Justine Pearce

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Production Companies
Sedna Films presents in co-production with Garidi Films
With the participation of Procirep, Angoa-Agicoo, CNAP, Centre National du Cinéma

et de l'Image Animée
With the support of Région des Pays de la Loire in partnership with CNC

CAST

Kate Moran
Ali
Niels Schneider
Matthias
Nicolas Maury
Udo
Éric Cantona
stud
Fabienne Babe
star
Alain Fabien Delon
teen
Julie Brémond
slut
Jean-Christophe Bouvet
sergeant
Pierre-Vincent Chapus
assistant sergeant
Dominique Bettenfeld
Frédéric Bayer Azem

policemen
Louis-Orfeo Marin
star's son
Béatrice Dalle
chief superintendent

In Colour
[1.66:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Peccadillo Pictures Ltd

French theatrical title
Les Rencontres d'après minuit



Kate Moran, Niels Schneider, Nicolas Maury

While the actors play their roles ultra-straight, dirty humour, often based around the Stud's penis, cuts through the solemnity. The playful approach to gender isn't restricted to the ambiguous figure of Udo – the Stud is objectified far more than the Slut, and it is he who gets a faceful when the Slut comes to enthusiastic orgasm. The film's few misfires come in the first half. A cameo from Béatrice Dalle as a crazed superintendent who sexually humiliates the Stud is neither funny nor shocking, and the cock-and-spunk talk grows tiresome. But when the sad story of Ali and Matthias is revealed, the film grows up. The emotion and sentimentality of the climax are far more subversive than the multiple words for penis.

The performances are excellent. As Ali, Kate Moran, a veteran of French queer cinema following *Born in 68* (2008) and *Man at Bath* (2010), turns the potential absurdity of the final scene into a moving coda, while Dolan regular Niels Schneider plays the achingly pretty Matthias with wry pathos. The film also marks the feature debut of Alain Delon Jr, whose father recently described homosexuality as “*contre-nature*”. His reaction to this sublime and very queer tale has yet to be documented. **S**

In a dream, Ali screams for her lover Matthias but she is driven off by a motorcyclist. In the real world, an unconscious Matthias is revived by Ali and maid Udo. They prepare for an orgy as midnight approaches. First to arrive is the Slut, followed by the Stud and the Teen. Ali recognises the Teen as the biker from her dream. The Stud reveals that his life has been ruined by his insatiable sexual desire.

The Star arrives, and insists that the orgy take place in the dark. The Slut maliciously turns on the lights, distressing the Star. The Teen comforts her. The Slut remembers a dream in which she is reunited with her deceased mother. The Teen reveals that he left his parents for a solitary life, and is attracted to the night. Ali tells how she and Matthias fell in love long ago, but Matthias died in a war. Udo, then a gypsy, agreed to bring him back to life.

The group leave the apartment. Ali, the Teen and Matthias kiss. The Star watches a movie in which she plays a mother with incestuous feelings towards her son. The characters are visited by cackling, hooded figures, one of which takes on the persona of the Slut's mother. Ali strikes it and it shatters. Matthias dies. Though distraught, Ali and the others begin the orgy. Afterwards, the Star, the Stud and the Slut disappear. As the Teen moves to leave, Ali and Udo plead with him to stay with them. Dawn breaks.

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Home cinema



Coming to America: Bruno S in the 1977 film *Stroszek*, one of the highlights of a new Herzog collection

WANDERLUST AND WONDER

Even when not filming in perilous conditions or far-off locations, Werner Herzog is interested in the extremes of the human experience

THE WERNER HERZOG COLLECTION

THE UNPRECEDENTED DEFENCE OF THE FORTRESS DEUTSCHKREUZ/LAST WORDS/ PRECAUTIONS AGAINST FANATICS/FATA MORGANA/HANDICAPPED FUTURE/LAND OF SILENCE AND DARKNESS/AGUIRRE, WRATH OF GOD/THE GREAT ECSTASY OF WOODCARVER STEINER/THE ENIGMA OF KASPAR HAUSER/ HEART OF GLASS/HOW MUCH WOOD WOULD A WOODCHUCK CHUCK/STROSZEK/NOSFERATU THE VAMPIRE/WOYZECK/GOD'S ANGRY MAN/HUIE'S SERMON/FITZCARRALDO/COBRA VERDE

West Germany 1967-87; BFI/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 1.37:1/1.66:1/1.85:1; Features: commentaries, stills galleries, trailers, documentaries, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

This is a good summer to be a Werner Herzog fan. Not only has he been popping up in the most unlikely places (an unexpected benefit

of having, for family reasons, to see the English rather than Japanese version of Miyazaki Hayao's *The Wind Rises* was hearing Herzog's instantly recognisable voice in a supporting role), but the near-simultaneous publication of the BFI's Blu-ray box and Paul Cronin's 542-page doorstopper *Werner Herzog: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Faber & Faber) has significantly improved English-friendly availability and coverage of his work.

In the case of the BFI's survey of his pre-1988 output, it's easier to list the titles they *haven't* included: the disowned juvenilia (*Herakles*, *Game in the Sand*), the fiction features *Signs of Life*, *Even Dwarfs Started Small* (heavily cut by the BBFC for animal cruelty reasons on its last DVD outing) and *Where the Green Ants Dream*, and the documentaries *The Flying Doctors of East Africa*, *La Soufrière* (both already released in Revolver's *Encounters at the End of the World* Blu-ray box), *No One Will Play with Me*, *Ballad of the Little Soldier* and *The Dark Glow of the Mountains*.

Four or five decades ago, Herzog was one of several standard-bearers of what was dubbed 'the New German Cinema', although even then his was clearly an unusual talent, not least because of his evident wanderlust. While his compatriots looked to Germany and America for inspiration,

Herzog all but started out thinking globally: even while still finding his filmmaking feet he travelled to Crete, the Sahara and Peru in search of ideas. His trips to the supposedly more familiar United States also made a point of delving into generally unexplored territory – one of the most eccentrically delightful films in this collection, *How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck?* (1976), takes two already fertile subjects (the almost impossibly fast yet still completely precise diction of livestock auctioneers, and the quasi-biblical lifestyle of nearby Amish communities) and enriches them further through direct comparison. The fiction feature that he made immediately afterwards, *Stroszek* (1977), favoured Wisconsin prairie and small-town locations over stock tourist traps, capturing their unique ambience with the eye of an anthropologist but also with genuine affection. Herzog similarly refuses to turn the evangelical charismatics at the heart of 1980's *God's Angry Man* ("When I yell, I wanna be heard!") and *Huie's Sermon* into caricatures – on the contrary, he confessed to Cronin that he was mesmerised, comparing Brooklyn's Bishop Huie Rogers to Mick Jagger in full flood.

Those two films were shot back to back, as were *Handicapped Future* (1970) and *Land of Silence*



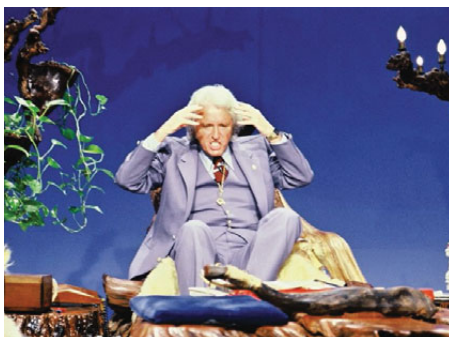
The question of why Klaus Kinski willingly agreed to work with Herzog remains endlessly intriguing

and *Darkness* (1971). These are variations on a theme: how to exist in societies whose popular prejudice (to quote Charles Dickens, another great champion of the dispossessed) prefers their members to have the full complement of functioning limbs and sensory organs. His subjects adopt alternative lifestyles not out of fad or fashion but because they have no choice: a single anecdote about a deaf and blind man who lived in a cowshed purely because it guaranteed the uncomplaining proximity of living creatures is ineffably powerful in its capturing of human loneliness in an almost unimaginably extreme form. Made before he turned 30, *Land of Silence and Darkness* remains one of his greatest achievements, an opinion with which the director fully concurs.

The three earliest films in the box are essentially sketches, although all with an unmistakably Herzogian air. The most characteristic is *The Unprecedented Defence of the Fortress Deutschkreuz* (1967), in which four men take over an abandoned building and lie in wait for attackers – but the commentary (deliberately) never makes it clear whether they're deluded, genuinely at war or simply playing an elaborate game. Shot in Crete (and in Greek), 1968's *Last Words* anticipates *Woodchuck* in its study of compulsive and strangely hypnotic verbal repetition (the film's ostensible subject, an island evacuated because of a leprosy outbreak, is swiftly forgotten).

The most overtly comic film in the set, *Precautions Against Fanatics* (1969), shows four shady characters hanging around a racecourse, each claiming to have a more important function than the others (all are played by celebrities of the era: the film is probably funnier if they're recognised). *Fata Morgana* (1971) is the most substantial of these early films, and not just in length: shot in Africa (primarily the southern Sahara) with no script, it's a non-narrative attempt at capturing desert-triggered hallucinations and man-made constructions with a natural surrealism whose calm, unruffled images belie considerable production difficulties, described in lipsmacking detail in Herzog's optional commentary track.

Sometimes, Herzog set himself more controllable challenges, most notably in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974) and *Heart of Glass* (1976). The first of these starred the self-taught musician Bruno S, a man who could very well have been the subject of one of Herzog's documentaries. (*Stroszek* drew on elements of his actual life.) Though in theory much too old to play the real-life teenage founding Kaspar Hauser, Bruno inhabited the role with an intensity that Herzog found exhilarating, being only too happy to work around the psychological downsides of dealing with a non-actor with a severely traumatic past. And with *Heart of Glass*, Herzog famously had his cast hypnotised in order to ramp up to the max his conviction that cinema has an inherently hypnotic quality. Despite notionally being a narrative-driven piece, it's as much an exploration of inner states as *Fata Morgana*, which it vividly recalls in its ecstatic treatments of European landscapes. Rapture of a different kind pervades *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner* (1975), a portrait of



Evangelist Gene Scott in *God's Angry Man*

champion ski-jumper Walter Steiner, whose feats Herzog regards as going far beyond conventional athleticism. As a decidedly non-trivial footnote, this was the first of Herzog's documentaries to feature the director's own inimitable narration, something that would rapidly become an essential ingredient in both English and German versions.

And then there's the Klaus Kinski quintet (*Aguirre*, *Nosferatu*, *Woyzeck*, *Fitzcarraldo* and *Cobra Verde*, 1972-87), about which little more needs to be said other than that the question of why an actor so notoriously addicted to money and material comforts willingly agreed not only to work with Herzog in the first place but repeatedly in less than propitious environments remains both unanswered and endlessly intriguing. *Aguirre* is the best of these, fusing an ostensibly conventional adventure narrative with the hallucinatory qualities of *Fata Morgana*. But the large-scale set pieces of *Nosferatu* and *Fitzcarraldo* (respectively involving 10,000 rats and a very large boat) remain as sublimely hubristic as ever. *Cobra Verde* pales by comparison, largely because the relationship between director and star irretrievably broke down during production, but *Woyzeck* is a miniature

While his compatriots looked to Germany or America for inspiration, Herzog all but started out thinking globally



Made before he was 30, *Land of Silence and Darkness* is one of Herzog's greatest achievements

jewel, shot in less than three weeks immediately after *Nosferatu* on a comparatively tiny budget.

The discs were sourced from high-definition masters provided by Herzog's own company, with further work carried out by the BFI. The results are outstanding at their best (*Aguirre* has never come close to looking this verdantly tactile on video before), and while a handful of the other titles betray traces of overzealous digital scrubbing (present on the Herzog-supplied masters and therefore irreversible), everything marks a substantial improvement on previous video releases. Where available, both English and German versions are included – in most cases this just affects the soundtrack but *Nosferatu* (which looks particularly good in its crepuscular grainy glory) was shot twice over in each language.

Despite the bounty of the films themselves, the BFI hasn't skimped on the extras. The booklet provides credits and a single long essay by Laurie Johnson, and several of the films have trailers, stills galleries and Herzog commentaries (on the fiction features and *Fata Morgana*, all in English). Jack Bond's delightfully wayward *South Bank Show* includes, among other things, Herzog's ruminations on the transportation and placement of megaliths and the state of early 80s English football. Best of all are Les Blank's already renowned Herzog portraits: the self-explanatory short *Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe* (1980), a bet with Errol Morris being lost with impeccable grace, and the feature-length *Fitzcarraldo* 'making-of' *Burden of Dreams* (1982), a study of obsessive drive that matches any of Herzog's own features. Almost as lengthy is Neil Norman's NFT interview with Herzog from 1988. The Blank and Bond films are contained on a single disc that's frankly good enough to release separately – as indeed is everything else in this astonishing collection.

(A similar Herzog Blu-ray collection has been released in the US by Shout! Factory, adding some films – *Even Dwarfs Started Small*, *Ballad of the Little Soldier*, *Where the Green Ants Dream*, *Little Dieter Needs to Fly*, *My Best Fiend* – but omitting others, and without the Les Blank, Jack Bond or Neil Norman extras. Herzog completists will doubtless need both, despite the hefty overlap.)

New releases

FILMS STARRING CHARLES BRONSON

THE MECHANIC

Michael Winner; USA 1972; Twilight Time/Region-free Blu-ray; 100 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: isolated score track, audio commentary with cinematographer Richard H. Kline and film historian Nick Redman, original theatrical trailer

MR MAJESTYK

Richard Fleischer; USA 1974; Kino Lorber/Region A/1 Blu-ray/DVD; 103 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: original theatrical trailer

BREAKHEART PASS

Tom Gries; USA 1975; Kino Lorber/Region A/1 Blu-ray/DVD; 95 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: original theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

That Charles Bronson was an icon there can be little doubt, but it takes a real filmmaker to optimise a great star, and the man the Italians called *Il Brutto* didn't always work with the best.

Case in point Michael Winner, who directed Bronson in six films beginning with the 1972 western *Chato's Land*, made as the actor had finally emerged as a viable leading man after two decades as a heavy-for-hire. (Bronson only worked with J. Lee Thompson more.) Winner's drab, leaden films are good test cases to distinguish between people who like 70s action movies without exception and those who care a straw about direction. *The Mechanic* has Bronson as Arthur Bishop, a mob hitman whose every looks-like-an-accident job is a work of art. The film's silent first reel, in which we watch Bishop lay out a kill, is justly celebrated, though as soon as people start talking, things quickly go south. Like Winner, who became a restaurant critic for the *Sunday Times* later in life, Bishop fancies himself an aesthete and gourmet; like Winner, Bishop is in actual fact nothing but a butcher. (The last half-hour of the film takes place in Naples, presumably so that Winner could get some eating in.) The relationship between Bishop and his understudy, played by a young Jan Michael-Vincent, was apparently rife with sexual tension in the script developed by Lewis John Carlino for the original director, the immensely talented Monte Hellman, and we can but lament, "If only".

By the time of the 1975 western whodunit *Breakheart Pass*, Bronson had appeared in his signature role, the grieving avenger in the Winner-directed *Death Wish*, so it's a razz on his star persona when his outlaw character John Deakin announces that "I am not a man of violence" as he's taken into custody in *Breakheart*. Brought aboard a steam train allegedly crossing the Rockies to relieve a diphtheria epidemic, Deakin investigates sinister goings-on aboard that suggest an ulterior mission. The intrigues are kept up reasonably well by journeyman director Tom Gries, though his name is overshadowed by that of his second unit director and legendary stunt coordinator Yakima Canutt. Other incentives here include a marvellous, boisterous score by composer Jerry Goldsmith, and a murderer's row of contemporary character actors, including Ed Lauter (later re-teamed with Bronson in *Death Wish III*), Ben Johnson, Charles Durning and former light-heavyweight champion Archie Moore, who memorably spars with Bronson atop a moving train.

Nothing in either of the above films is invested with anything like the emotional impact

achieved by a scene of a barnful of watermelons being shot to mush in 1974's *Mr Majestyk*, which seems like a holocaust in the context of the film. With Richard Fleischer, Bronson has his best director until Walter Hill the following year in *Hard Times* (recently released by Twilight Time), and in Vince Majestyk, ex-con, Vietnam vet and divorcee-turned-Colorado melon farmer, the actor has a character that takes full advantage of his working-class veracity – the moment where he dashes a little salt into his beer during a date at a honky-tonk couldn't be more lived-in. It doesn't hurt that Bronson's wife Jill Ireland, usually wedged into love-interest parts (as in *The Mechanic* and *Breakheart*), is replaced here by a fine Linda Cristal, playing a politically active migrant worker who takes a shine to Majestyk, or that Bronson gets a really worthy opponent, both in actorly chops and physical build, in the form of that flare-nostrilled bull of a man Al Lettieri (*The Godfather*), playing a mob triggerman who runs foul of the wrong melon monger. It's a shame that Bronson didn't get more like this one to market.

Disc: Fine transfers all, with Lucien Ballard's cinematography on *Breakheart* a particular revelation. A new sub-licensing deal between MGM and Kino Lorber is already bearing fruit – melons, if you like.

CAUGHT

Max Ophuls; USA 1949; Olive Films/Region A/1 Blu-ray/DVD; 88 minutes; 1.37:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Like Fritz Lang alongside him, Max Ophuls saw his career fall into a three-act structure – long Euro-beginnings, Hollywood middle stretch and then an ironic return to the post-Nazi continent – and today his reputation rests largely on the late gigantic butterflies, from *La Ronde* (1950) to *Lola Montès* (1955). But just as Lang's mid-century American *noirs* have come to overshadow the famous silents, Ophuls's moment-in-the-sun Hollywood output, particularly his twin fem-noir home runs of 1949, *The Reckless Moment* and *Caught* (alongside that daydreamiest of hyper-romance zephyrs, 1948's *Letter from an Unknown Woman*), may be his finest achievements.

Caught tracks the trajectory of Barbara Bel

Geddes's sensible and sceptical working girl, who crosses paths with Robert Ryan's Howard Hughes-esque control-freak industrial millionaire; he decides to marry her simply to prove his shrink wrong, and from there she's a pampered prisoner perpetually flying the coop (and taking a job in the office of heroic slum doctor James Mason).

A peerless study in deranged masculine tyranny and traditional gender-role combat, made with no small payload of ire a few years after Hughes had fired Ophuls and buddy-producer Preston Sturges from *Vendetta*, this densely textured drama resonates because of Ophuls's insistence on subtle and varied naturalism in the acting, and because of the still amazing expressiveness of his camera. Every single shot is germinated from an emotional idea, layering visual textures on top of roving restlessness and shifting compositions that tell the story all by themselves. (The DP was Sternberg favourite Lee Garmes.)

Half the film's sequences – from the dancing-to-proposal *pas de deux* between Bel Geddes and Mason to the simple conversation between Mason and his practice partner Frank Ferguson, with Bel Geddes's empty desk between them, the dolly pivoting over the vacant space – could be used as definitive object lessons in how to employ the medium with superhuman eloquence, taste and verve. (Ryan and Mason, two opposing poles, both incapable of clumsiness, are blocked so perfectly they barely need to act at all.) That Ophuls trafficked so smoothly the specific American milieu of *Caught* and *The Reckless Moment* – the only two films of his actually set in the US – makes their tense and convincing experiences all the more dazzling. **Disc:** Simple archive print, no extras. The film deserves more, like a parade.

FAVORITES OF THE MOON

Otar Iosseliani; France 1984; Cohen Film Collection/Region A/1 Blu-ray/DVD; 105 minutes; 1.67:1; Features: audio commentary by Phillip Lopate, booklet essay, trailer

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

The first film Iosseliani made in Paris after leaving Soviet Georgia in the early 80s, this relaxed, perambulating farce tapestry lacks the atmosphere of his earlier films, and the mastery of the tracking-shot in his later French opuses, but it's still a movie no other person except this particular and most lovable master of human ceremonies could've made.

Always more French in his bones than Caucasian, Iosseliani here introduces himself to Parisian life, which he seems to find absurdly propulsive. (The quotidian time-killing of his Georgian films is quashed here by the constant Western need to go somewhere, right away.) The story per se criss-crosses characters in the streets (and in time) in the context of following a set of (often broken) hand-painted china and a portrait painting that gets progressively smaller through time as it is cut from its frame and stolen over and over again. The polyglot ensemble (including László Szabó, Maité Nahyr, Iosseliani fave Pascal Aubier and a young Mathieu Amalric) are terrorists, antique buyers, teachers, philanderers, bomb builders, detectives, artists,



The marriage trap: *Caught*



DEMY MONDE

Jacques Demy was a great pop artist – but his reputation for frothy exuberance ignores the often bitter realities of his subject matter

THE ESSENTIAL JACQUES DEMY LOLA/BAY OF ANGELS/THE UMBRELLAS OF CHERBOURG/THE YOUNG GIRLS OF ROCHEFORT/ DONKEY SKIN/UNE CHAMBRE EN VILLE

Jacques Demy; France 1961-82; Criterion/Region A/1 Blu-ray and DVD Dual Format; 88/84/92/126/90/93 minutes; 2.35:1/1.66:1/1.85:1/2.35:1/1.66:1/1.6; Features: 'The Young Girls Turn 25' and 'The World of Jacques Demy' by Agnès Varda, four short films by Demy, archival interviews, documentaries, interviews, booklet

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Broken homes. Crushing compromises for survival's sake. Self-destructive addiction. Sex murders. Algeria and Vietnam. Labour unrest. Incest. Impotence. Plague times. Suicide. These are a few of the subjects addressed by Jacques Demy, whose films have somehow maintained a reputation for being so frothy, so light, so very *French*. This is because Demy is one of those great pop artists whose infectious exuberance almost but not quite conceals the bitter realities of their subject matter – think of *The Go-Betweens*, whose parochial sensibility is not so far from Demy's, in their glistening song 'Streets of Your Town', which contains the line "Watch the butcher shine his knives/And this town is full of battered wives."

Criterion's new box-set brings together half of the dozen live-action features that Demy completed before he died in 1990, aged 59. That Demy died of Aids was an open secret that his wife and partner Agnès Varda only addressed publicly in her 2008 film *The Beaches of Agnès*. The Criterion box includes two of Varda's memorial films about Demy, 1993's *The Young Girls Turn 25* and 1995's *The World of Jacques Demy*, the latter of which draws a picture of the budding aesthete from a working-class background – father a mechanic, mother a hairdresser, the combination almost ridiculously appropriate – who, through his films, expressed an enchanted vision of the seaside towns of his youth. Demy's private sexual proclivities are, of course, not spoken of, though in an archival interview he tellingly comments: "I've always been afraid of sinking into debauchery... A puritanical streak, obviously."

Among the set's other trimmings are a handful of shorts by Demy, including the eight-minute *Les horizons morts*, a 1951 student film in which the director himself stars as a heartbroken young man contemplating suicide in the clichéd sordid garret after an affair gone sour. It's the work of a lad in love with love gone wrong and in thrall to Bresson and Cocteau, classicist formative influences which, in Demy's films, cohabit with a passion for joyous, demonstrative American musicals. The result is an emotionally direct yet coyly withdrawn style that is wholly Demy's own, his contrary impulses manifest in the women



Singin' in the rain: Catherine Deneuve in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*

and men of his films, the former vivacious, flighty and perilously alive (Anouk Aimée in *Lola*, Jeanne Moreau in *Bay of Angels*, Dominique Sanda in *Une chambre de ville*), the latter serious, pragmatic and interior (Marc Michel, Claude Mann and Richard Berry, in the same films.)

Demy stretched the tensions intrinsic to his style to their thrilling, vibrating limits in his two movie musicals of the 60s, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964) and *The Young Girls of Rochefort* (1967), the films on which his popular reputation largely rests. Both are set to music by Michel Legrand and have production design by Demy's old hometown friend and lifelong collaborator Bernard Evein who, with some strategic splashes of paint and startling, metaphor-rich wallpaper, would lend his director's location shoots an element of uncanny hyperreality. When, in *Umbrellas*, the owner of a tidy shop (Anne Vernon) that's alive with vibrant, variegated hues refers to her store as "sinister", or says of her teenaged daughter (played by a teenaged Catherine Deneuve!) that she's "no beauty queen", this alerts us to the fact that the reality being addressed is something separate from what the film is expressing. Demy doesn't strip ordinary life down to find the ugly truths below the surface, like many a mean-minded 'realist'; he strips it to find the luminosity beneath the ugliness.

Demy is particularly devoted to antique architectural pieces that add a touch of fantasy to the average person's life: the transporter bridge on which the opening number of *The Young Girls of Rochefort* is staged, or the Passage Pommeraye which appears in several of his films, home of the cine-club of his youth. Art is not the property of the elite. In *Umbrellas*, we see

Demy doesn't strip life down to find the ugly truth below the surface; he strips it to find the luminosity beneath the ugliness

Deneuve's shop girl sneaking out to a performance of Bizet's *Carmen* with her lover, a mechanic (Nino Castelnuovo), and this reference point is key – Demy is working in the operatic tradition of *verismo*, dignifying the experience of the people that he knew and grew up with by raising common speech to song, lending humble lives the flash and grace of MGM's Arthur Freed Unit.

Une chambre en ville (1982) is the Demy film that comes nearest to opera, with atypically emphatic close-ups of Dominique Sanda's Edith singing with a tempestuous, wilful force heretofore unknown in his work (Florence Davis sings the part). The film's tragedy is of the headline-making variety rather than everyday we-can't-have-it-all resignation, following a fast-burning 24-hour affair that takes place against the backdrop of a dockworkers' strike. Set in his home town of Nantes in 1955, *Une chambre* is Demy's perhaps most personal film, and his most unremittingly grim, with the possible exception of 1972's marvellous *The Pied Piper*, the dun, bleak flipside to his final international hit, 1970's pastel fairytale *Donkey Skin*.

"Time is luck," one of a handful of concise aphorisms that recur in Michael Mann's filmography, is a fitting description of Demy's worldview, for time and luck are the coin of the realm in his films. This is expressed nowhere so nakedly as in his *Bay of Angels*, the story of a circumspect young man (Claude Mann) pulled between roulette-table binges in the wake of a heedless woman who has made a religion of gambling (Moreau). You pick your number, you put your chips down, you hope for the best and you settle for what you've got at the end of the night. One of Demy's own aphorisms, voiced by Delphine Seyrig's Lilac Fairy in *Donkey Skin*, applies here: "It might be sad, but that's life."

The transfers included in Criterion's set, taken from 2013 digital restorations, are all-around marvellous, the most impressive accomplishment being the resurrection of a viable *Lola*, despite the disappearance of the original negative. 

THE WORLD GONE MAD

A forgotten 70s children's series about survival in an unravelling society reveals much about the state of the nation at the time

THE CHANGES

John Prowse; UK 1975; BFI/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 246 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: 'At Home in Britain' COI documentary, stills gallery, booklet featuring essays by Peter Wright, Paddy Kingsland, Lisa Kerrigan et al

Reviewed by Rob Young

My own youthful memories of watching this BBC children's series are woven together with the power cuts and candlelit evenings of the Heath era, and of government-sponsored TV ads rubber-stamping 'SAVE IT!' (electricity, gas, etc) on to the screen. *The Changes*, adapted from a trilogy of dystopian young-adult fiction by Peter Dickinson published at the end of the 60s, was apparently broadcast only once, and few of my peers shared my recall of it at all. In more recent years, though, its themes of paranoid techno-fear, a violent return to pre-industrial bucolia and supernatural forces, not to mention its modish Radiophonic Workshop soundtrack, have made it something of a grail for aficionados of the large Venn intersection of cultish interests that includes evocations of 'weird Albion', speculative fiction and music of a certain vintage.

Children's TV in the 70s brimmed with rustics with Zs in their names (Worzel Gummidge, Kizzy, Lizzie Dripping, or time-travelling Catweazle with his suspicion of 'electrickery') and uncanny fusions of geomancy and science fiction (*The Owl Service*, *Children of the Stones*). *The Changes* combined all these elements, but Anna Home's adaptation presented it in a gritty realist style.

Episode one, entitled 'The Noise', is as good as anything the BBC children's department ever produced. A brief opening credit sequence features a bustling soundtrack by Paddy Kingsland, including an early example of Roland TR-808 'acid' squidge, and stock footage of factory production lines, traffic streaming over the Severn Bridge and InterCity diesels hurtling out of tunnels. The music is interrupted by dissonant clangs over explosions and earth upheavals. The opening minutes are nightmarish children's programming. A roaring electroacoustic shiver sweeps over an indolent urban household and the TV fizzles. The parents of Nicky Gore (Victoria Williams) are convulsed with a rage against the machine, mindlessly smashing television, lamps and household appliances. Outside in the streets, rioters are overturning cars, trashing bikes and dumping electrical goods. After a few days of national emergency, the parents elect to find safe haven in France, for the good of Nicky's pregnant mother, and they, along with all the other inhabitants, hastily pack suitcases and flee the city for the coast. In the panic Nicky is separated from them, and they leave without

her. She returns to the family home but food supplies run out and the water is cut off.

Her journey through the hinterlands of rural England begins when an old man in a doorway warns her of approaching disease – "It's like when I was a kid, nicer really, more peaceful," he observes of the empty city. But fleeing with a band of roving Sikhs, Nicky encounters an England pitched back into a new dark age of agrarian subsistence and gullible superstition, where brute force and xenophobia hold sway, and women are reduced to inferior domestic roles. As Nicky comments: "We're going back to a time we don't belong in."

The early sequences of society breaking down gradually give way to environmental meltdown and 'necromancer's weather', and it becomes clear that 'the Changes' are being directed by some mysterious entity. To an extent the mystery is preserved even to the end, but the Arthurian tinge to the finale, deep in an underground chamber, and the fact that only indigenous Anglo-Saxons are affected by 'the Noise' confirm that *The Changes* is an essay on the condition of England, warning of the dangers of isolationism and the tarnished dream of pre-industrial Arcadia, washed down with a draught of Gaianism. The countryside is full of dangers and pitfalls, while its inhabitants are submissive

What stands out today is the suggestion of the thin line between civilisation and barbarity

Little Englanders held hostage to brutal leaders and brigands. In episode five, 'Witchcraft', Nicky travels on a horse-drawn cart through Cotswolds trackways where farmhands toil impotently with bent pitchforks and broken fences.

The footage shows its age, with the sandiness typical of archive mid-70s news footage. But the roughness feels right, as if it's a documentary made on equipment furtively salvaged from the wreckage of civilisation. Factors alien to the CBeebies age include long passages of unsubtitled Hindu dialogue, pathetic swordfights, accents seesawing between Somerset and Glamorgan, and characters openly drinking beer. But such archaisms are all part of the entertainment in revisiting a 40-year-old series. Amid the occasionally stilted script and dialogue, some remarkable performances stand out, notably David Garfield's creepy portrayal of the self-appointed witchfinder of Shipton, Mr Gordon, sniffing out 'wickedness' from behind a bushy beard. Oscar Quitak's Mr Furbelow, a psychically scarred secret-keeper, brings a pair of petrified eyes to the final episodes. Williams's Nicky remains a sturdy, dogged female lead even against some wooden scriptwriting and one too many stumbles requiring a male helping hand.

Apart from the Luddite machine-breaking, what stands out today is the overt treatment of racism and the suggestion of the thin line between civilisation and barbarity. This was strong meat to place before a teatime audience, but Home was committed to creating a canon of youth television to compare with the great works of children's literature, and *The Changes* deserves that comparison. 



Fellow travellers: Nicky (Victoria Williams) and companions flee the turmoil

New releases

 beggars, burglars, hookers, punk rockers, children, dogs – some more than one of these – all going about their isolated business yet constantly intersecting with each other.

A bombing (of a spitefully loathed public statue) and a burglary are more or less the hubs around which the fabric weaves, and there are shades of Renoir and Tati. The upshot is an accumulation of passings, watchings, transactions and confrontations, all observed with a warm, unjudgemental equanimity. Class stratifications are crossed and exploited, the higher classes usually churning with unmet desires, the lower (and often criminal) element content in the bosom of companionship. (“*Les favoris de la lune*” is a free translation from Shakespeare’s *Henry IV Part I*, describing thieves.) It may sound over-structured but it’s not – new characters and happenstances keep getting introduced, and it’s clear that, philosophically anyway, we are only seeing a small portion of what the human zoo has to offer.

The comic set pieces are select (a bomb test in the woods, manned by faux Arabs in ridiculously un-Arabian headgear, culminates in an impressive accidental suicide and then a deal-sealing handshake) but Iosseliani’s priority has always been the unemphatic comedy of flow, and so we settle as he does, all of us like patient boulevardiers on our second glass of Pernod.

Disc: Spotless remastering. Phillip Lopate’s erratic, menschy-uncle commentary track is less informative than it is merely conversational

HEARTS AND MINDS

Peter Davis; USA 1974; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray and Region 1 DVD Dual Format; 112 minutes; 1.85:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: director’s commentary, over two hours of unused footage and extended interviews, essay booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

“Are you really asking me this goddamn silly question?” asks an exasperated Walt Rostow, former aide to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. The question was “Why do they want us there?” – “us” being the US military and “there” Vietnam, and the evident inability of dozens of interviewees, from military and political top brass to the lowliest grunts, to come up with a definitive answer, even at what Rostow calls “this late stage”, is a key plank in Peter Davis’s cinematic case against the war. (The film won an Oscar at the time and recently came in at number 77 in this magazine’s documentary poll.)

It’s often cited as the granddaddy of the likes of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, and although Davis is only an occasionally overheard presence on the soundtrack, there’s little doubt as to where he stands. His interviews with Vietnamese civilians explicitly give the lie to the lofty orientalism embedded in sweeping claims by military planners about them placing less value on life, and Davis similarly compares and contrasts the propaganda (with openly racist B-movies doing their bit to help brainwash American audiences) with what was actually happening ‘over there’. There’s plenty of gallows humour: the Vietnamese economy may be shattered according to overall statistics, but makers of artificial limbs and coffins are going through an unprecedented boom.



Tokyo story: *House of Bamboo*

This review is being written against a backdrop of ongoing conflicts in Gaza, Iraq, Syria and Ukraine, which, while each has its own specific set of circumstances and rationales, nonetheless exhibit the same fatal combination of lofty idealism and wilful ignorance on both sides, the latter concerning everything from cultural and local knowledge to a willingness to tune out seemingly evidence-backed allegations of atrocities perpetrated by one’s own side. Davis’s film may be 40 years old but these goddamn silly questions still need to be asked.

Disc: An excellent high-definition presentation of an understandably rough-and-ready original (the prominent film grain suggests that much of it was 16mm-sourced). Davis’s candidly reflective commentary is ported over from the old Criterion DVD but this new disc also includes more than two hours of previously unreleased interviews that didn’t make the final cut. A hefty 40-page booklet provides ample historical context (by American and Vietnamese commentators) to compensate for the fact that Davis reasonably assumed that a war-weary 1974 audience wouldn’t need spoonfeeding.

HOUSE OF BAMBOO

Samuel Fuller; USA 1955; Simply Media/Region 2 DVD; 97 minutes; Certificate PG; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Philip Concannon

Japan had been a source of fascination for Sam Fuller ever since his childhood, and when Darryl Zanuck floated the idea of shooting something in Tokyo he seized his opportunity. A loose reworking of Harry Kleiner’s screenplay for *The Street with No Name*, *House of Bamboo* follows Robert Stack’s undercover soldier as he attempts to infiltrate Robert Ryan’s criminal gang, but the familiar narrative is elevated by being set in a then unfamiliar context and by the director’s evident relish at capturing this environment on film.

Throughout *House of Bamboo*, Fuller ensures that every part of the CinemaScope frame is alive with activity. He sets key sequences against the backdrop of a spectacular Noh performance or in a bustling pachinko parlour, and he utilises screen doors and paper walls for dramatic effect, notably through his use of silhouettes late in the story. Scenes that might have been mundane in other hands or in a more conventional setting suddenly feel thrillingly

fresh here, with Fuller’s direction of action as tough and dynamic as ever, and he tops it all with a climactic shootout on a rooftop carousel.

House of Bamboo also gave Fuller the opportunity to challenge convention with two daring love stories. In a country still marked by the war of a decade earlier, the chaste but simmering relationship between Stack and Shirley Yamaguchi carries a potent charge, and the film’s depiction of gangster activity is distinguished by clear homoerotic undertones. When Cameron Mitchell’s Griff finds his position in the criminal hierarchy usurped, he reacts with all the frustration and dismay of a jilted lover. In his autobiography *A Third Face*, Fuller expressed great satisfaction over successfully slipping this subtext into the picture “for some unexpected pizzazz”, and it certainly gives the pivotal betrayal in the film a striking emotional impact.

Disc: A decent transfer, though the film’s vibrant images will have you yearning for a Blu-ray.

MADAME DUBARRY

Ernst Lubitsch; Germany 1919; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 114 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: additional short film, 36-page booklet

Reviewed by Michael Pattinson

From the flirtatious airs of its opening to its disturbingly brutal finale, *Madame DuBarry* is arguably Ernst Lubitsch’s most sophisticated film of the silent era. Complementing the strong female leads of *The Doll* (1919) and *I Don’t Want to Be a Man* (1918) and anticipating the historical sweep of *Anne Boleyn* (1920) and *The Loves of Pharaoh* (1922), this seven-act, tonally diverse epic melds its director’s inimitably delicate handling of complicated lives with ambitious production values for which he’s less noted.

Set before and during the French Revolution, *Madame DuBarry* recounts the affair between its eponymous countess (Pola Negri) and King Louis XV (Emil Jannings). First seen completing a floral arrangement with automated precision, our tragically flighty heroine visits one gentleman after another, domineering all suitors with something between flippancy and fervour. Negri at once brings vitality and frailty to the role – her DuBarry is as much an agent of her own fate as she is conditioned by the sumptuously scandalous seductions of the country’s power-exerting courts.

Much of the film’s intrigue unfolds behind closed drapes – an early scene, in which Madame DuBarry visits an admirer, features the literal drawing back of an opulent curtain, not long before a wonderful moment involving a giant mirror. Its crowd scenes, taking place in town squares and opera halls, are vivid: utilising the entire frame, Lubitsch makes the most of his Z-axis to evoke an actual working universe cohabited by monarchs and their subjects. Early compositions have a stately quality, with Lubitsch arranging people harmoniously within shot; this is counterbalanced in later, more anarchic sequences that suggest the rousing sweep of a social base united in its disdain for the state. Heads will roll.

Also included on both discs of this dual-format release is *When I Was a Man* (1916), Lubitsch’s earliest surviving



New releases

 film – a 37-minute three-act comedy in which the director plays, with much hilarity, a resourcefully mischievous man eager to get revenge on the hellish mother-in-law responsible for his marital breakdown. **Disc:** The Blu-ray disc presents the feature in 1080p high definition. Gorgeous tinting is accompanied by original French/German intertitles (English subs optional).

THE NORTH STAR/ ARMORED ATTACK!

Lewis Milestone; USA 1943/57; Olive Films/
Region A/1 Blu-ray/DVD; 106/76 minutes;
1.37:1; Features: 1944 radio adaptation

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

A remarkable fossil from the brief span of years in which Hollywood actively made pro-Soviet agitprop to aid the war effort against the Axis forces, *The North Star* was an independent super-production of Samuel Goldwyn's, scripted by an under-contract Lillian Hellman and stuffed with faux-Soviet choral rally songs written by Aaron Copland and Ira Gershwin, all anti-anti-communists whose lefty politics would become less fashionable at war's end. A big hit in its day, and nominated for six minor Oscars, the film is as abject an effort to wring audience sympathies as any Soviet film; in fact, its sunny portrait of life on a bustling Ukrainian kolkhoz, complete with wise fathers, boisterous grown sons, tractor worship and a battery of exultant musical numbers, plays as a stupefyingly unironic clone of contemporaneous Soviet movies, down to the field-and-sky compositions and dancing masses. More than a little surreal, then, to have Dana Andrews, Walter Huston and Anne Baxter, in Russian peasant duds, joining in with the communism feelgoodism (singing! strumming a balalaika!), at least until the skies start ominously roaring with German bombers.

Which is when Milestone, often inept with any scene that does not entail the stress or violence of war, comes to life, and *The North Star* erupts, as air raids assault and Erich von Stroheim's Wehrmacht platoon occupies the border village, with stunning process shots, multi-plane tracking shots and moments of painful poetry – as when Ann Harding's dazed mother, her youngest child dead in her lap, dissuades Huston from approaching with just a hesitant wave of a bloody hand. Hellmanesque moments poke out of the mayhem – for example, when the village's mamas morosely linger before setting their own homes on fire. There's no shortage of death and sacrifice, as the villagers are mown down by the soldiers (not a common sight in movies before this) and turn into partisans to resist the onslaught. (It's the only film where you'll ever see Jane Withers stand and blow away Nazis with a rifle.)

It was *Life* magazine's film of the year but by 1945 few wanted to remember it fondly, and it was only evoked years later once the HUAC hearings were under way, as evidence of subversion. Come 1956 and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, a self-protecting Goldwyn pulled it out of mothballs, had half an hour's collective-farm warmth and music cut from it (as well as any mention of Russia at all, leaving the characters' homeland a vague Eastern European locale)



Heads will roll: Madame Dubarry

and slapped on an archive-footage coda, with narration lamenting the communist scourge that followed the film's trials. 'An adaptation of' *The North Star, Armored Attack!* is composed entirely of Milestone excitement and tension, a bizarre example of history literally remaking itself in Hollywood and trying to send its earlier convictions down the Orwellian memory hole.

Disc: Both versions are from standard archival prints, clean if often erratic with contrast.

THE ROOTS OF HEAVEN

John Huston; USA 1958; Simply Media/Region
2 DVD; Certificate 12; 100 minutes; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Philip Concannon

John Huston famously developed a taste for big-game hunting while shooting *The African Queen* – a passion satirised by Clint Eastwood in 1990's *White Hunter Black Heart* – so it comes as a surprise to find him directing this fervently pro-conservationist drama. The director later looked back on the troubled production with some regret, saying, "The pictures that turn out to be the most difficult to make usually turn out to be the worst – like *Roots of Heaven*." But this ambitious and admirable film doesn't deserve to be written off so easily.

Its chief attraction is its impressive cast. In a role intended for William Holden, Trevor Howard brings charisma and a touch of eccentricity to his portrayal of Morel, a man who has devoted himself to singlehandedly protecting Africa's elephants. He finds unlikely allies in Juliette Gréco's former prostitute and Errol Flynn's drunken ex-soldier, both of whom are also scarred by their wartime experiences. The strength of these central characterisations is one of the film's virtues, with our understanding of all three characters deepening throughout the movie and Flynn in particular adding a surprising layer of pathos to his scenery-chewing turn.

Adapted from Romain Gary's prizewinning novel, *The Roots of Heaven* suffers from some sluggish pacing and wayward storytelling but Huston and cinematographer Oswald Morris take advantage of the African locations to ensure that it's always visually commanding. Huston also has some fun with Morel's more unusual methods of protest – including spanking a socialite and shooting Orson Welles in the buttocks – but the film is generally a subdued and serious issue-driven picture that's determined to emphasise the gravity of the situation, often through Morel's impassioned speeches: "They

have to capture, kill, destroy everything," he exclaims. "Soon we'll be alone on this earth with nothing to destroy but ourselves." *The Roots of Heaven* may have been dismissed by critics, audiences and even the director himself, but its message resonates as powerfully as ever today.

Disc: An adequate transfer, no extras.

STRANGER ON THE PROWL

Joseph Losey; Italy 1952; Olive Films/Region
A/1 Blu-ray/DVD; 82 minutes; 1.37:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

The all-but-forgotten film Joseph Losey made immediately after being blacklisted in Hollywood following HUAC testimony and leaving America, and the first of several projects he was forced to make pseudonymously (the film, scripted by fellow exile Ben Barzman, was initially "written and directed" by the fictional Andrea Forzano), this Italian-made *noir* parable couldn't be more of an allegory of modern life as a lost exile in a hostile world. The Red scare turned Losey's outsider-obsessed career into a peripatetic panorama of high drama and triumph, and this little movie scans as the neorealist chapter in the larger saga.

Paul Muni – his career and reputation protected here by the filmmakers' aliases – stars as the stranger, a lost and desperate wanderer possibly fleeing the police, washed up in an Italian fishing town and looking to sell a gun he's holding and pay for a boat out. Lurking around like a shadow, the man (in what is virtually a neorealist tradition) criss-crosses paths with a small boy (Vittorio Manunta), who's also grifting and searching for level ground; an accidental death and a tragic misunderstanding send the two on the run together.

The lack of specifics isn't mysterious so much as irrelevant and universal. The war-shattered landscape, another neorealist anchor, is specific enough. Co-shot by legendary DP Henri Alekan, Losey's movie is densely inhabited and visually conceived; an indicative scene in a kitchen, dramatically structured around the perspectives of the boy, a teenage girl and the obese older slimeball pressuring her into compromise, is Ophulsian. Muni is intense as always, but his conviction pushes the film away from realism and towards parable, where the movie is already leaning.

Disc: No frills, but rare enough to be news.

FILMS BY FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT

SHOOT THE PIANIST

France 1960; Artificial Eye/Region B Blu-ray/Region
2 DVD; Certificate 15; 78 minutes; 16:9; Features:
introduction by critic Serge Toubiana, audio commentary by
cinematographer Raoul Coutard, Marie Dubois screen tests

JULES & JIM

France 1962; Artificial Eye/Region B Blu-ray/
Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 102 minutes; 16:9;
Features: introduction by critic Serge Toubiana, audio
commentary by Jeanne Moreau, theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Kate Stables

After the success of *The 400 Blows*, Truffaut perversely wanted to make a film only for cinephiles, adapting David Goodis's tough thriller *Down There* to honour (and play with) the idea of American *noir*. Part crime melodrama, part

romance, spiced with musical numbers, humour and slapstick ("On my mother's life" indeed), *Shoot the Pianist* is Truffaut's most New Wave film – though as DP Raoul Coutard points out in his uncommonly good commentary, Truffaut was a traditionalist in many ways, chiefly interested in the film's emotional through-line and thrown by the new working methods. These required some ingenuity; that inky, atmospheric opening scene, diving like Albert Rémy's chancer Chico between light and shade, is the result of rain blowing reflector lamp bulbs.

The singer Charles Aznavour plays Charlie, the washed-up pianist of the title. Simultaneously tough-talking and timid, hollow-eyed with sadness, he is the most unlikely of *noir* heroes, his move from high to low art echoed by Truffaut's own genre-slumming. Like Charlie, a protagonist riven with self-doubt, the movie itself looks oddly modern, due to the nimble mix of menace, melancholy and comic anecdote that make it so light on its feet.

Unsurprisingly, the film's protean charms left audiences cold on its release, ensuring that Truffaut achieved his original aim. Watching it back-to-back with *Jules et Jim* (equally handsomely mounted by Artificial Eye), what links the two is a relentless playfulness, as well as a desire to upend ideas of what a thriller or a period literary adaptation should look like – plus those ubiquitous man-to-man chats about love, equal parts worry and wonder, establishing Truffaut truly as the man who loved women.

Jules et Jim's extraordinary formal ingenuity, that fleet-footed combination of archive footage, stills, heart-stopping freeze-frames and airy bicycling montages, is designed to catch the joy of cinema's most famous love triangle as it flies. Like the great art that Jules (Oskar Werner), Jim (Henri



Collective endeavour: *The North Star*

Serre) and Catherine (Jeanne Moreau) gorge on (Picassos swapped, Strindberg scrutinised, Goethe as foreplay), the film grows thematically even chewier with age and is nowadays less a paean to free love than a pitiless, sharp-eyed dissection of its cost. Viewed through the telescope of more than 50 years, Moreau's capricious, imperious Catherine seems, as Germaine Greer remarked recently, not so much a bewitching free spirit as an indulged and destructive narcissist. The WWI scenes repay particular attention (Truffaut amplified them to great effect from Henri-Pierre Roché's original novel). Those relentless no-man's-land explosions in the archive footage reverberate through Jim's story of lust-by-letter, but they are also a moral fusillade, a trauma that sets the three lovers looking within for an honesty the world has forfeited.

Disc: The DVD transfers are first-rate, and the soundtracks gratifyingly sharp. Extras are not as copious as the Criterion versions but both Coutard's and Moreau's commentaries are excellent. Serge Toubiana, who contributes crisp,

all-encompassing overviews and elicits gems from both Coutard and Moreau on the commentaries, is the unsung hero of both releases.

WE'RE IN THE MOVIES: PALACE OF SILENTS & ITINERANT FILMMAKING

Iain Kennedy, Stephen Schaller et al; USA 1914-2010;

Flicker Alley/All-region Blu-ray/Region O NTSC

DVD; 217 minutes total; 1.77:1/1.33:1; Features:

additional shorts, booklet with new essays

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

This film-geek jumble gives top billing to Iain Kennedy's *Palace of Silents*, a 2010 doc about Los Angeles's 70-year-old, trend-bucking institution the Silent Movie Theatre. But the real interest lies in the other films' glimpses of a forgotten barnstorming early-cinema phenomenon – what's since been labelled 'itinerant filmmaking', and was called then 'home talent movies' or 'local movies'.

This movement, which as we see lasted into the sound era, had small production companies enter American towns and cities and enlist the locals – often for a fee – to star in a film about their town. The resultant two-reeler, processed and edited, would be brought back for a complimentary showing a week later, for what would presumably be its only public showing. Often funded by local businesses, these films are of purely historical interest – tapping the history of their locality, of course, but also of this unique branch of coming-to-the-people cinema, where the novelty of being in a film superseded the demand for the quality one might find in the movie as a spectator.

Here is an expansive area of cinema scholarship to be plumbed and indexed – as it is echoed by the movies manufactured aboard Aleksandr Medvedkin's 'film train,' a development-lab-equipped train the filmmaker drove across the USSR in the 30s, shooting and printing films on the spot, showing them to the peasants they'd filmed and then often discarding the celluloid thereafter. Where else did this happen? The video's framing programme is Stephen Schaller's 1983 doc *When You Wore a Tulip and I Wore a Big Red Rose*, in which the young filmmaker interviews the elderly citizens of Wausau, Wisconsin, about the filming in their town of O.W. Lamb's *The Lumberjack* in 1914. This is on the disc, too, though there is little need to see it once Schaller and his doted-upon octogenarians have dissected its imagery, its personas, the changes in Wausau's architecture and the fate of the film company's treasurer, killed during shooting by a quarry explosion. Schaller's film is messy and unfocused but as a tissue of cinephilia and micro-history both, it's entrancing.

Disc: Also included are several preserved 1918 itinerants from the Kentucky mountains, a 1937 melodrama centred on the young children of Corsicana, Texas, and *Huntingdon's Hero* (1934), a Pennsylvania-made attempt at 'local talent' comedy that's hilariously unfunny, manages to insert a car-dealer's promo into the action and climaxes with a camera pan of the whole town packed into a movie theatre, told by the unseen filmmaker, "The picture will be ready next Monday – hope you like yourselves!" 📺



Shoot the Pianist Part crime drama, part romance, spiced with musical numbers, humour and slapstick, it is Truffaut's most New Wave film

Television

THE BOY FROM SPACE

UK 1971/80: BFI/Region 2 DVD: Certificate PG: 200 minutes: 1.33:1. Features: re-cut feature-length presentation of drama; animated reading segments; audio version x 2; downloadable PDFs of pupils' pamphlets.

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

The Boy from Space was a short science-fiction drama by Richard Carpenter, the creator of *Catweazle*, about two earth children (Sylvestra Le Touzel and Stephen Garlick) who befriend an alien child (Colin Mayes) whose spaceship has crashed in the woods near their home – they interpret his name as Peep-Peep. But he is being pursued by another, less friendly alien, and they become embroiled in a struggle to keep Peep-Peep free.

It was broadcast in 1971, and again in a different form in 1980, as part of *Look and Read*, a BBC series aimed at “reluctant readers”: as Ben Clarke explains in a helpful note accompanying this release, the programmes were in essence “long and varied context cues to help children read a story”. So vocabulary is simplified, plotting sketchy, and actors' delivery at times hammily slow and emphatic; disbelief is not suspended.

This incongruously lavish release presents the drama in two forms. The first is as part of the 1980 series: this time around, the drama was given a new narrative frame, and integrated with reading lessons from a frozen-faced, dome-headed space-creature called Wordy, less Sontaran warrior than Bertie Bassett. He and his spaceman friend Cosmo inhabit a space station called Word Lab 1; their chirpy conversations about spelling are punctuated by animated musical segments dealing with the uses of individual letters and letter-combinations, sung by the great Derek Griffiths. Flashes of unintentional humour (a disembodied voice keeps shouting at Wordy to “Drop that E” – this only became retrospectively amusing in the late 80s, during the Summer of Love) don't make up for an air of amateurishness: this version is recommended only to nostalgists and aficionados of COI films. But you can also watch the drama recut as a single 70-minute feature. Anyone hoping for the conventional pleasures of 70s TV SF, beyond plywood sets and gravel pit locations, faces disappointment. But the appeal is not purely ironic or nostalgic; Paddy Kingsland's music is always interesting, and the etiolated, blond-wigged aliens, with their stumbling gait and warbling, machine-like voices, are both piteous and threatening; genuinely otherworldly.

Discs: Technically impressive transfers and re-editing of what seems to have been intractable material. The pamphlets and audio versions are interesting artefacts of what now seem almost prehistoric educational practices.

Z CARS: COLLECTION TWO

UK 1972: Acorn/Region 2 DVD: Certificate 12: 334 minutes: 4:3. Features: cast interviews; tribute to James Ellis.

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

When *Z Cars* was first broadcast by BBC TV in 1962, its picture of pragmatic, boozy coppers, and the way it integrated criminal investigation with social critique stirred a lot of excitement. Several cast members quickly became popular favourites – in particular, the Ulster actor James



Z Cars Though issues are prodded a little too forcefully into the foreground, the dramas are tightly constructed, the dialogue sharp

Ellis as desk sergeant Bert Lynch, but also Stratford Johns, Frank Windsor, Brian Blessed and Colin Welland. But Acorn's compilations – startlingly, the first on DVD – are so far drawn from the 1972 season, by which time most of the original creative team (writer Troy Kennedy Martin and a roster of directors that included Ken Loach) had moved on, along with many of the stars and – at any rate, this is the consensus – much of the bite.

In fact, while the rationale for sticking to 1972 is elusive, and it is frustrating not to have a proper release of surviving early episodes, it was at this stage still an impressive and politicised piece of popular drama. The six episodes here tackle a variety of social issues – the effects of a prison sentence on the criminal's wife and children; the knock-on effects of criminalising harmless but supposedly immoral behaviour (here it's after-hours drinking, but the same arguments could easily be applied to soft drugs); the uneasy relationship between police and press. Ellis still presides, brilliantly, behind his desk, and John Slater remains from the early series as the slab-faced, disillusioned DS Tom Stone, a cockney workhorse out of place in Newtown, a run-down area somewhere north

of Liverpool. A few strands run through the different episodes – PC Skinner's decision to drop out of CID and go back into uniform, the thuggish tendencies of PC Yates – and though at times the issues are prodded a little too forcefully into the foreground, the self-contained dramas are tightly constructed, the dialogue sometimes very sharp (“Everybody's on the make these days,” Stone complains: “You can smell the greed in the air”). There is a lot of pleasure to be had, too, from spotting famous, or almost famous, faces: a young Philip Jackson, Geoffrey Hayes out of *Rainbow*, Elizabeth Sladen (Sarah Jane Smith – though the Doctor's assistant is not obvious under the slap and the Scouse accent), Graham Armitage (one of Ken Russell's favoured actors), a surprisingly pudgy pre-*Blake's 7* Gareth Thomas, and Paula Wilcox. It's not *The Wire*, but it has a lot of charm. If only they hadn't replaced the original theme – ‘Johnny Todd’ played by a pipe-and-drum band – with a jazzed up brass version.

Discs: Good transfer. The tributes by fellow cast-members to James Ellis, who died earlier this year, are warm, but dispiritingly oblivious to an impressive career beyond *Z Cars*, not just as actor but as poet and translator of French poetry. ☹

Lost and found

ROAD

OVERLOOKED FILMS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE ON UK DVD OR BLU-RAY

Broadcast in 1987, the television drama *Road* was Alan Clarke's devastating response to Margaret Thatcher's 'war on the North'

Reviewed by Nick Wrigley

The 1980s found Alan Clarke boldly experimenting with form – honing techniques and sensibilities that he'd developed mostly within the 'studio system' era of 60s/70s British television plays. By 1987, after only his third (and sadly final) film for theatrical release, *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*, he flung himself back into TV work – simultaneously making two films (*Christine* and *Road*) for the new 'experimental' BBC2 *Screenplay* strand. Three years later, after two more films (*Elephant* and *The Firm*), Clarke was dead at 54 from cancer of the spine.

Road was Clarke's adaptation of Lancashire playwright Jim Cartwright's fierce 1986 stage play of the same name, which had been an immediate sensation at the Royal Court Theatre, London. The visceral relevance of Cartwright's play (an art bomb dropped towards the end of Thatcher's war on the North) was perfect for Clarke. As with Andrea Dunbar, David Rudkin, Roy Minton and David Leland, Clarke fell in love with the writing and he and Cartwright enjoyed a happy collaboration. According to *Road*'s BBC producer David M. Thompson, Clarke "saw something in it which he felt he could make his own". It was shot on 16mm film (at Cartwright's request, because he hated the look of 'flat' video) by John Ward (fresh off Steadicam duties on *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* and *Full Metal Jacket*) in overlapping sessions with *Christine* during May-June 1987. Originally broadcast immediately before *Newsnight* on Wednesday 7 October 1987, *Road* clocked in at an unusual (for TV) 63 minutes.

The tone is set in the first few minutes when a character (played by Andrew Wilde) looks directly into camera and roars threateningly at us. The roving Steadicam follows a number of unhappy, dispossessed working-class inhabitants of an unnamed northern town in the mid-1980s as they look for happiness in a high-unemployment wasteland. Characters subsist in the shockingly run-down town, holding impromptu discos in derelict church halls, drinking in grotty squats and desperately trying to make sense of their lives ("That's what you do, you drink, you listen to Otis, you get to the bottom of things, and let rip." "What for?" "To stop going mad"). A newspaper review the day after transmission described it as "X-rated *Coronation Street*".

Clarke's choices regarding the form of the film were important ones. W. Stephen Gilbert observed in 1990 that Clarke "reshaped *Road* into something that owed nothing to the stage [...] a film reconceived with a Steadicam". Conversely, Stephen Frears felt that *Road*'s Steadicam meant that the performances had to



Unforgettable: a black-eyed Lesley Sharp paces the street

The memorable ending is, for many people, one of the most amazing scenes in all of British television

be "very, very real" and by nature the film was "theatrical... because there's no montage". (Alan Clarke, ed. Richard Kelly, 1998). The original stage play's main character, a narrator named Scullery (played in London by Edward Tudor-Pole and later by Ian Dury), was jettisoned for the film. Clarke chose the probing, wide-angle Steadicam in Scullery's place – directly pulling the viewer into the heart of the film. That the film looks as it does – shot on location, among rows of condemned houses – is a quirk of fate. Early ideas involved placing the action entirely

in a quarry, but eventually a set was specially built at a London studio. An electricians' strike scuppered studio shooting plans at the last minute, and Clarke uprooted production to the former coal-mining town of Easington in County Durham (later also used in *Billy Elliot*). Clarke described the semi-derelict filming location as "an expression of how they felt internally".

A number of fine, unknown young actors were cast: Moya Brady, Neil Dudgeon, Jane Horrocks, Lesley Sharp, Mossie Smith and David Thewlis. Sharp's famous, brutal, unbroken five-minute scene pacing the barren streets with a black eye, rueing her drunken husband ("Can we not have before again? Can we not? Can we not have before again? Can we not?") is particularly unforgettable. According to Ward, it took 18 takes.

The memorable ending, featuring Otis Redding's 'Try a Little Tenderness', is for many people – perhaps more so for those in northern England who lived through Thatcher – one of the most amazing scenes in all of British television. It defies adequate explanation, but suffice to say that a previously inarticulate character suddenly finds words to express her feelings about life, and a chant develops ("If I keep shouting, somehow, I somehow might escape").

It was through the medium of television, in the pre-internet vacuum of the 70s and 80s, that Clarke's work exploded into people's homes and affected viewers in ways they didn't expect – his overarching care to be non-didactic encouraged them to come to their own conclusions about what they'd seen. Next year marks both the 25th anniversary of his death and what would have been his 80th birthday, so it seems only fitting to start celebrating loudly this fiercely talented filmmaker – whose groundbreaking television work has, since he died, remained largely unreleased on DVD and, rather disgracefully, unbroadcast on the medium it was created for. 9

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID



'If we took *Road* to the BBC now I suspect it would be a hard sell. It's a different environment now. Whenever they showed his stuff back then though, the public reaction was often "Fucking hell! This is brilliant!" It had a real impact. There was even a bloody panel discussion broadcast the day after transmission, with phone-ins and all sorts. One guy phoned and said he'd lit a cigarette when it started and was so transfixed he forgot to lift it to his mouth and burnt his bloody finger!'

Jim Cartwright interviewed by Nick Wrigley in 2014

MORAL TALES

FRED ZINNEMANN AND THE CINEMA OF RESISTANCE

By J.E. Smyth, University Press of Mississippi, 320pp, \$60, ISBN 9781617039645

Reviewed by Philip French

Born in Vienna in 1907, the son of a Jewish doctor, Fred Zinnemann became entranced with the cinema as a student ("I sensed that film, like music, offered a direct way to people's emotions"). Dropping out of law school to study cinematography in Paris, he cut his cinematic teeth in Berlin on *People on Sunday*, the legendary precursor of neorealism, then headed for Hollywood. Working as an assistant to his hero Robert Flaherty, he developed a lifelong commitment to realism and true-life stories, and after a valuable but not particularly rewarding apprenticeship at MGM he attracted attention in 1944 with *The Seventh Cross*, a Nazi prison-camp picture starring Spencer Tracy. After World War II he established himself as a fine storyteller and fastidious craftsman, with a particular interest in heroes and heroines of conscience torn between self-interest and duty. He was a short, wiry, soft-spoken, deceptively fragile man, and in his dealings with Hollywood moguls, and later as an independent filmmaker based in Europe, he proved formidably successful in protecting his ambitious, carefully chosen projects.

In all he made 22 feature films over 50 years, several of them masterpieces, few of them outright failures with critics and the public. He gave Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando and Grace Kelly their first screen roles, revived the career of Gary Cooper by giving him an Oscar-winning role in *High Noon* (1952), and directed Audrey Hepburn in her best picture, *The Nun's Story* (1958). He died in 1997 just before his 90th birthday and has yet to receive the attention that is his due. As J.E. Smyth, an American historian currently teaching at Warwick University, observes – with a certain degree of exaggeration – Zinnemann was "the American cinema's quiet but formidable enigma" when she began her book 12 years ago. The only book-length studies he has engendered are a couple of academic symposiums and the autobiography that appeared in 1992. I recall that book not only because of the contrast between its lavish production and its bland content, but because it was embarked on at the subject's invitation as a sort of 'told to' biography by a colleague of mine, the critic Alexander Walker. A friendly relationship became somewhat acrimonious when Zinnemann peremptorily took over, apparently fearing that the text was becoming overly candid. Modest as he appeared, Zinnemann was a controlling figure, as I discovered when late



Casting a spell: Fred Zinnemann gave Montgomery Clift and Marlon Brando their first screen roles

in his life he co-opted me on to a committee he quixotically formed to create legislation to prevent the colourisation of black-and-white films.

A full-scale critical life is thus long overdue, and Smith is clearly the person equipped to write it, having had unprecedented access to the vast archive of scripts, letters, memoranda, memorabilia and obsessive jottings which the intelligent, articulate Zinnemann deposited with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. However, as she announces in the title and then explicitly states, she has given us a different, though rather intriguing, book.

"This is not a biography or a filmography," she writes. "Instead it aims to be an intellectual film history focused on the filmmaker's lifelong interest in 20th-century resistance movements and anti-fascism." Unlike most other Eastern European Jewish émigrés of his age who came to Hollywood before World War II and later lost their families in the Holocaust, Zinnemann deliberately chose expatriation as a form of cultural liberation. But until his 30s he had not discovered more than very general areas to engage his mind or moral passion. These he found, Smith persuasively suggests, during the war when,

after failing to be accepted by the elite OSS (the predecessor of the CIA), he threw himself into polemical filmmaking. *The Seventh Cross* began an interrogative lifelong obsession with oppressive authoritarian regimes and institutions.

Smyth traces this development over the years as the interest is subtly extended and refined. After Nazi Germany in the 1930s, in *The Seventh Cross*, he took on the experience of camp survivors in post-war Europe in *The Search* (1948). The brilliant but now rarely shown thriller *Act of Violence* (a movie that makes a remarkable 1948 double bill with Abraham Polonsky's equally powerful *Force of Evil*) brought the war back to the mean streets of Los Angeles, as a crippled avenger seeks the traitor who triggered a massacre of US PoWs in Germany.

Zinnemann hoped that audiences for his allegorical western *High Noon* would take in his "sense of the railroad as a harbinger of evil" and "think of the shot of the tracks leading to Auschwitz's main gate". The post-Civil War battle against Franco conducted by the Spanish anarchist in 1964's *Behold a Pale Horse* (loosely based on the real-life exploits of Francisco Sabaté) led to trouble with the Spanish government; and, to the great annoyance of the French authorities, the duplicitous legacy of the French Resistance was brought into question by the attempted assassination of De Gaulle in *The Day of the Jackal* (1973). A Belgian nun leaving her convent to serve in the Resistance in *The Nun's Story* provided a rather greater challenge to the church than *The Sound of Music*. The cycle of films culminated in 1977 with the highly personal, morally convoluted *Julia*.

An aborted 1967 version of Malraux's *La Condition humaine* has a key part in this pattern, as has *From Here to Eternity* (1953), arguably Zinnemann's finest film, where the peacetime army and its brutal stockade stand in for the Nazis and their camps. Smyth, who has steeped herself in the history of resistance movements to write this book, makes convincing claims for Zinnemann's early recognition of the role of women in these struggles, for his constant

Zinnemann was a fine storyteller and fastidious craftsman, with an interest in figures of conscience torn between self-interest and duty

questioning of the myths created around such movements, and for his dangerous generosity in acknowledging the courageous role of communists in underground activities.

Smyth hops around, often achronologically, between these films, presuming a knowledge of plots that not everyone will have, and she ignores, largely or entirely, nearly half the *oeuvre*. She devotes just one paragraph to *A Man for All Seasons*, for instance, and half a line to her subject's final film, *Five Days One Summer*. Readers will need to have a filmography to hand – I certainly did. But it's a stimulating book that illuminates an important career. ☺

WATCHING THEM BE

Star Presence on the Screen from Garbo to Balthazar

By James Harvey, Faber & Faber, £18.99, 400pp, ISBN 9780571211975

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

James Harvey's book takes its title from the author James Baldwin's definition of star quality: "One does not go to see them act, one goes to watch them be." The author of *Movie Love in the Fifties and Romantic Comedy in Hollywood*, Harvey addresses the nature of this special quality of being in his latest, an amply illustrated collection of 13 essays.

Watching Them Be is divided into three sections. The first, 'Icons', is devoted to a number of marquee names associated with Hollywood's Golden Age, these names often matched with those of the principal identifiable co-author of their career: we have 'Dietrich and Sternberg' and 'Bergman and Selznick', while Garbo, perhaps not entirely to the benefit of her filmography, stands alone. This section ends on 'Charles Laughton' who, Harvey posits, "prefigured the Method, the most profoundly American acting style of our time". Laughton therefore makes a fitting bridge to his next section, 'Realists', just as that section's final entry, on 'Godard's Close-Ups', opens on to the third and final section, 'Transcenders'. Here we find Balthazar – yes, the hairy quadruped lead of Robert Bresson's 1966 *Au hasard Balthazar* – as well as Bergman again, now defected to Italy and Roberto Rossellini, an act of artistic bravery which Harvey compares to "Garbo [running] off with Robert Flaherty to make *Man of Aran*."

The chapter on Laughton, another much-kicked donkey, is among the book's finest, opened by an admirable summation: "Throughout his life, Laughton had a propensity, it seemed, for provoking in others the stupidest, most self-exposing kinds of brutality... It was almost like a gift. And it became the substance of his art." Harvey is, as it happens, more than a little sceptical of that art, and it's when he scruples to simply reconfirm the greatness of what consensus has deemed great that he shows to

best advantage. Even if one disagrees with the author's measured considerations of the Bergman/Rossellini collaborations or his scepticism towards Laughton's most beloved works – *The Night of the Hunter* (1955) is a "therapeutic-sentimental" film in "the grandiloquent folksy-art mode", while *Ruggles of Red Gap* (1935) sees Laughton playing the lead with "a misplaced emotional intensity" in a film that proves he "is not good at slapstick" – they are thrilling reading.

The Laughton chapter stands out, in part, because it finds Harvey mostly resisting the urge to transcribe scenes, even entire movies, from screen to page, instead elucidating the essential quality of its subject's persona. Filled as it is with beat-by-beat performance recaps, it is difficult to imagine *Watching Them Be* having been written in the years before home video playback. In a recent essay, 'Critical Condition', the writer Kent Jones put on trial "the assumption of a cinematic essence beneath an outer shell of mere appearances" involved in much auteurist criticism, concluding that "the work of actual description has hardly even begun". Harvey is the most diligent of describers – a child of Chicago in the 1950s, he is of the right age to have been at

Harvey identifies the subject of 'Nashville' as 'the madness of the American belief in our national innocence'

university during the heyday of 'close reading', and specialises in a patient and pragmatic analysis which I think of as typically Midwestern.

Harvey is not an epigrammatist on the order of, say, Kenneth Tynan, whose "What, when drunk, one sees in other women, one sees in Garbo sober" he quotes. One's response to each essay hinges to some degree on a pre-existing interest in the subject, for he writes for a reader familiar with the films in question, and his under-the-hood approach does not lend itself to perusal for its own sake – that is to say, one does not read Harvey to watch him write. His exhaustive descriptions, however, place the work under discussion before the reader with admirable clarity, while illuminating key details with precision and expertise – I particularly admire his exegesis of *Once Upon a Time in America* in his chapter on Robert De Niro. The next chapter, on 'Altman's *Nashville*', which devotes particular attention to the place in its panorama occupied by Lily Tomlin, also stands out. Harvey, who identifies *Nashville*'s subject as "the madness of the American belief in our national innocence," seems to excel with particularly American subjects, something that is also evident when he discusses how John Ford found in John Wayne the perfect vehicle for his prevailing tone of bittersweet rue, a figure whose face spoke of "loss and longing, of yearning toward the distant, the far-off, the unrecoverable". Harvey's description of Wayne's "genial, sceptical attention" also admirably describes his own mode of expression – and in an age when cheerleading is often passed for criticism, it is of considerable value. ☺



Garbo: taking the sober view

THE MAKING OF STANLEY KUBRICK'S 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

By Piers Bizony, Taschen, 1,386pp, £650/£900, four volumes (two hardbacks in a monolith-shaped metallic box, two softback handbooks outside the box), limited to 1,500 numbered copies signed by Christiane Kubrick (The first 500 are £900 art editions with a signed Brian Sanders print), ISBN 9783836547697

Reviewed by Nick Wrigley

Fifty years after work started on *2001: A Space Odyssey*, its lofty position as one of the greatest achievements in cinema is firmly established: it's shortly to be a centrepiece of the BFI's *Sci-Fi: Days of Fear and Wonder* celebration and was voted the best sci-fi film ever made in *Time Out*'s recent exhaustive poll. The welcome focus of this lavish package of books is how the film came to be and how Kubrick marshalled a handpicked army of super-talented artists to realise his extraordinary vision.

Three years in the making, this is Taschen's third such 'XL format' limited edition Kubrick book to be produced with the cooperation of his wife Christiane Kubrick, her brother Jan Harlan, Warner Bros and the Kubrick Estate (after 2005's *The Stanley Kubrick Archives* and 2009's *Stanley Kubrick's Napoleon: The Greatest Movie Never Made*). The two main hardback books in this edition arrive inside a black monolith-shaped metal box, itself housed inside a larger box that contains two softbacks (a facsimile of the original screenplay and 1965 production notes) plus a 'comic surprise' (an eight-page reprint of the 1969 *MAD* magazine strip '201 min. of a Space Idiocy', in which, ironically, the monolith is revealed to be an enormous book). The main 561-page book contains more than 400 pages of astonishingly beautiful imagery – pre-production paintings, conceptual designs, Kubrick's own large-format colour Rolleiflex photographs, and publicity materials from the Kubrick Archive – the majority of which has never been published before. The accompanying text is an updated version of Bizony's 1994 monograph *2001: Filming the Future*, which elegantly weaves together key material from a large number of sources: the author's interviews with senior production crew, Christiane Kubrick and actors combine with fascinating elements of Arthur C. Clarke's diaries and Kubrick's private correspondence. Bizony's background as a writer specialising in science and the history of technology accounts for his discernibly lean and thoughtful assemblage, in what could easily have been a sprawling mess in lesser hands.

Among much riveting Kubrick minutiae, the private notes he fired off to people are particularly eye-opening – such as to a team at IBM who had been tasked with imagining what computers of the future might be like. They had predicted that computers would be "something into which men went, rather than walked around". Kubrick shot back a note describing the work as "useless and totally irrelevant to our needs. I am extremely bored and depressed with all this abysmal waste of time. Annoyed, but lovingly, S." Similarly, when Clarke and Kubrick inspected an early cockpit set design one day, Clarke commented that it reminded him of a Chinese restaurant.



Ground control: Stanley Kubrick on the set of *2001: A Space Odyssey*

"That kills it for me," said Kubrick, and ordered a rebuild. Clarke wrote in his diary that day: "Must keep away from the Art Department for a few days." Another Kubrick note reveals a brainwave about how to cast hominids: "The Irish have long upper lips. Get me fifty 5ft Irish actors with long upper lips." This led to the then relatively unknown Ronnie Corbett being submitted to a series of unsuccessful make-up tests.

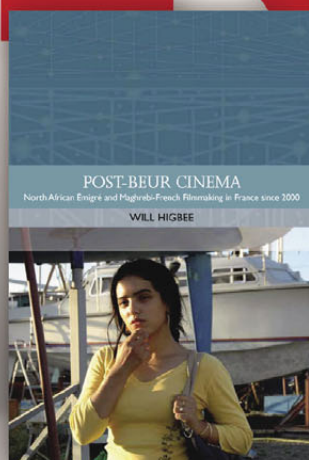
"Boat builders, architectural students, fine artists, sculptors, lithographers, metal workers, and even some ivory carvers fresh off a whaling boat" were enlisted to help on the production at Shepperton. One Saturday afternoon in July 1966, the crew jumped for joy as England scored against Germany in the World Cup, disturbing a painstakingly slow effects shot of a spacecraft that was taking all day (due to six-second exposure per frame). The studio floor was shaken so hard by their celebrations that it affected the reinforced shooting stage and wrecked the entire shot.

Another Kubrick note on casting hominids reads: 'The Irish have long upper lips. Get me fifty 5ft Irish actors with long upper lips'

Bizony suggests that one of *2001*'s legacies is that it has become a manifesto for a new generation of space businessman, "a blueprint around which a real commercial space industry can be founded" – Kubrick's beautiful space myth still proving influential, space year 2014.

My only gripe is with the book's physical form, where M/M design of Paris has clearly flown too close to the sun. The content feels shoehorned into the monolith – even the two softbacks are housed outside it. The pages of the two hardbacks are 44cm x 20cm (2.2:1, the aspect ratio of the film), making pages in the main book too tall and narrow to accommodate large imagery, so fold-out pages have been introduced. More than 200 large images traverse one or more folds, sometimes with the line going right through people's heads or down the middle of text-heavy images (the instructions of the 'zero gravity toilet' on page 449, for example). Perhaps this is a form of piracy protection to make it harder to scan and disseminate, but it does compromise the presentation of this already sold-out prestige art book. A trade version, due in early 2015, might hopefully reorientate the layout so that the function can better serve the form, and vice versa. As Stanley said: "Forget the wax and feathers, and do a better job on the wings." 📖

Read



POST-BEUR CINEMA

North African Émigré and Maghrebi-French Filmmaking in France since 2000

By Will Higbee, Edinburgh University Press, paperback, illustrated, 288 pp, £24.99, ISBN 9780748697373

Since the early 1980s, filmmakers of Maghrebi origin have made a key contribution to the representation of issues such as immigration, integration and national identity in French cinema – but mostly from the margins of the industry. However, since the early 2000s Maghrebi-French and North African émigré filmmakers have occupied increasingly prominent positions on both sides of the camera, announcing their presence on French screens in a wider range of genres and styles than ever before.

This detailed study of a transformative decade for Maghrebi-French and North African émigré filmmaking in France argues that a cinema has emerged which is simultaneously global and local in outlook. An absorbing introduction to this key development, *Post-Beur Cinema* is essential reading for students and scholars in film studies, French studies and diaspora studies. www.euppublishing.com

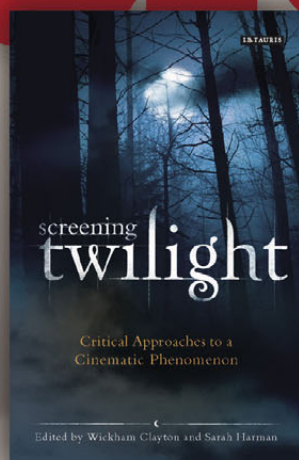


ELECTRIC SHADOWS: A CENTURY OF CHINESE CINEMA

Edited by James Bell, BFI, illustrated, paperback, 140pp, £16.99, ISBN 9781844578498

An introduction to the long and illustrious history of Chinese cinema, from the earliest silent films through the glamour of Shanghai's golden age in the 1930s, from the restrictions of the Cultural Revolution to the grand renaissance of the 'Fifth Generation' directors in the 1980s, and from the underground spirit of the 1990s to the booming multiplex cinema of the present. Along the way it tells the parallel stories of Hong Kong and Taiwan's cinema, and of China's great genre cinema, from wuxia swordplay epics and kung fu spectacles to crime thrillers and eerie ghost tales. Through a range of lavishly illustrated new essays, written by many of the foremost authorities in the field, the fascinating, dramatic history of Chinese cinema is revealed.

<http://shop.bfi.org.uk>



SCREENING TWILIGHT

Critical Approaches to a Cinematic Phenomenon

Edited by Wickham Clayton and Sarah Harman, IB Tauris, 232pp, Hardback, £56.00, ISBN 9781780766652 Paperback, £14.99, ISBN 9781780766669

The *Twilight* saga, a series of films adapted from Stephanie Meyer's four vampire novels, has been a sensation, both at the box office and through the attention it has won from its fans. This series has also been the subject of criticism and sometimes derision – often from critics and on occasion even from fans. However, it also offers rich opportunities for analytic and critical attention, which the contributors to *Screening Twilight* demonstrate with energy and style.

The book unpacks how this popular group of films work as cinematic texts, what they have to say about cinema and culture today, and how fans may seek to reread or subvert these messages. The chapters address *Twilight* in the context of the vampire and myth, genre and reception, identity, gender and sexuality, and through re-viewing the series' fandom.

www.ibtauris.com



MARNIE

By Murray Pomerance, BFI Film Classics Series, BFI Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, paperback, 96pp, illustrated, £12.99, ISBN 9781844576548

A thrilling tale of anxiety and moral extremity, *Marnie* (1964) cemented Alfred Hitchcock's reputation as a master of suspense and the visual form. Murray Pomerance weaves critical discussion together with production history to reveal Marnie as a woman in flight from her self, her past, her love and the watching eyes of others. Challenging many received opinions – including claims of technical sloppiness and the proposal that Marnie's wedding night is a 'rape scene' – Pomerance sheds new light on a film that can often be difficult to understand and accept on its own terms. Original and stimulating, this BFI Film Classic identifies *Marnie* as one of Hitchcock's masterpieces, highlights the film's philosophical and psychological sensitivity, and reveals its sharp-eyed understanding of American society and its mores.

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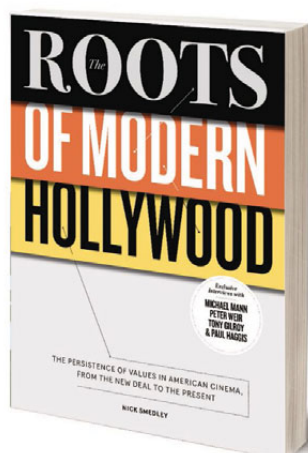
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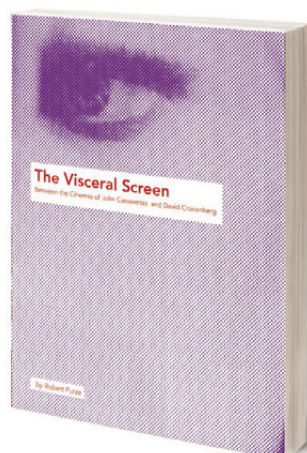


The Roots of Modern Hollywood

The Persistence of Values in American Cinema, from the New Deal to the Present

By Nick Smedley | ISBN 9781783203734
Paperback | £30, \$43

In this insightful study of Hollywood cinema since 1969, film historian Nick Smedley traces the cultural and intellectual heritage of American films, showing how the more thoughtful recent cinema owes a profound debt to Hollywood's traditions of liberalism, first articulated in the New Deal era. Although American cinema is not usually thought of as politically or socially engaged, Smedley demonstrates how Hollywood can be seen as one of the most value-laden of all national cinemas.

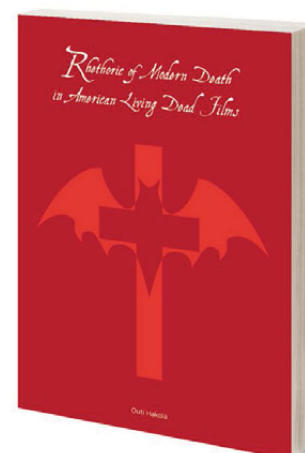


The Visceral Screen

Between the Cinemas of John Cassavetes and David Cronenberg

By Robert Furze | ISBN 9781783203703
Hardback | £60, \$86

The Visceral Screen sets out to articulate alternative ways of appreciating film aesthetics outside the narrative/spectacle continuum. Cassavetes and Cronenberg are established auteurs, but the elements of their films that appear to be barriers to their artistic status—for example, slipshod method and lingering violence or pre-digital special effects—are reassessed in *The Visceral Screen* as other indicators of creativity. In this way, Furze encourages debates of what makes a film good or bad—beyond how much it is seen to adhere to particular, established models of filmmaking.



Rhetoric of Modern Death in American Living Dead Films

By Outi Hakola | ISBN 9781783203796
Paperback | £43, \$30

Zombies, vampires, and mummies are frequent stars of American horror films. But what does their cinematic omnipresence and audiences' hunger for such films tell us about American views of death? Here, Outi Hakola investigates the ways in which American living-dead films have addressed death through different narrative and rhetorical solutions during the twentieth century. She focuses on films from the 1930s, including *Dracula*, *The Mummy*, and *White Zombie*, films of the 1950s and 1960s such as *Night of the Living Dead* and *The Return of Dracula*, as well as more recent fare like *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *The Mummy*, and *Resident Evil*.



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READERS' LETTERS

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at *Sight & Sound*, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN
Fax: 020 7436 2327 Email: S&S@bfi.org.uk

CAST ASIDE

It was gratifying to read Robert Hanks's review of the 1964 BBC TV series adaptation of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Television, August, *S&S*). The portrayal by Alan Badel as the Count made me look out for his performances in later years. Hanks suggests that he was not a bigger star mainly due to miscasting, and I am sure he is right – the chairman of the rugby club in Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life* is perhaps another example – but his cameo as the Minister in *The Day of the Jackal*, is an example of a screen actor who can, through a quiet and restrained performance, dominate the movie when he is on screen, and act as a counterpoint to the tension in later action scenes. He was a much underrated and underused actor.

Peter Jones Leicester

BOLD IDEAS

When reading a film review in *S&S* one would expect the name of the director to catch the eye. *S&S* is not foreign to the *politique des auteurs* as shown by the numerous pages dedicated to various directors in each issue, with their names pushed forward on the cover. Instead, one sees first the name of the reviewer, in bold face on an isolated line, whereas the name of the director is barely visible, in very light face. In the end credits the names of the cast are printed in bold face. The directors deserve a similar treatment.

Patrick Stragier Charentes, France

ABOUT A BOY

The *S&S* September issue featuring polls on the Greatest Documentaries of All Time was very welcome. As Nick Bradshaw's main article ('Tall Truths') suggests, this has been a frequently taken for granted, but increasingly important, class of films. *S&S* has given it well-deserved recognition.

While I would not quarrel with listing *Dont Look Back* (1967) among the top picks, I would argue with the use of the word 'pioneering' in James Bell's accompanying notice. The true pioneer in this category is the National Film Board of Canada's *Lonely Boy* (1962), directed by Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor. *Lonely Boy* is a similarly personal look at a rock star – in this case Paul Anka – which combines spontaneous and informal views of performer, performances, and dotting fans during the singer's tour of New York and New Jersey. It deserves far more attention than it usually gets. *Dont Look Back* is remarkable, but it was not a first.

Ray Lahey Canada

STATE OF AFFAIRS

In his review of Noah Isenberg's book on Edgar G. Ulmer (Books, *S&S*, August), Nick Pinkerton writes: "Ulmer began an affair with Shirley while he was directing *The Black Cat* for Universal..." Not so.

In fact they met later when they were both about to start work on *I Can't Escape* for Max Alexander's Beacon Productions (it was shot in June 1934). Indeed, Isenberg goes on to quote from Shirley's 1998 interview with Tom Weaver.

LETTER OF THE MONTH THE UKRAINIAN CONNECTION

Brian Winston's admirable essay on *Man with a Movie Camera* only neglects to mention that the Greatest Documentary of All Time is Ukrainian. *Sight & Sound* even uses the Russian release title instead of the original, *Liudyna z Kinoaparatom*.

Finding it impossible to work in their own way in Moscow, Vertov and his brother Mikhail Kaufman transferred to Ukraine, which was enjoying a brief, thrilling and artistically productive period (1927-30) of relative cultural and political autonomy – one boldly vaunted slogan was even 'Away from Moscow'. So Kaufman was able to make *In Spring* and Vertov *The Eleventh Year* and *Man with a Movie Camera*. Introducing last year's Pordenone Festival retrospective of this brief golden age, Ivan Kozlenko wrote, "The fact that the film was made in Odessa and partly in Kiev and Kharkiv is often mistakenly disregarded by researchers. But not by chance was the totally apolitical *Man with a Movie Camera* different from Vertov's other agit-films. The film's first shots lyrically capture the special atmosphere of the Mediterranean-like city of Odessa, serving as evidence of the director's aesthetic assimilation in Ukraine... Its recognisable Ukrainian landscapes and 'non-Russian' aesthetic code combined with the characteristic lyricism of its southern world-view, all endow *Man with a Movie Camera* with the features of a distinctly Ukrainian work."



The film was reluctantly released in Russia – fortunately, since it resulted in the great Stenberg brothers poster, which you happily reproduce.

David Robinson by email

She told it this way: "Max was hiring Edgar to work on *I Can't Escape* and he invited him to dinner... after we had dinner, Max made the mistake of saying he was very tired and he had a headache, and that I would entertain Edgar, go out to the movies or something with him. Well, I entertained Edgar..." She was 19 years old.

D.J. Turner Canada

EXPLOITATION CINEMA

David Thomson, characteristically in my view, gets just about everything wrong in relation to *Last Tango in Paris*. Are 'ripeness' and 'voluptuous' OK words to use in relation to the young Maria Schneider, he asks. No, because Schneider is exploited shamelessly, as she later testified. Her constant nudity and the merciless concentration on her pubic area are signs of just how far Bertolucci's politics had moved from his great early work. It is also interesting that Eva Green has acknowledged that her parents, agent and friends tried to persuade her not to appear in Bertolucci's *The Dreamers* and that she was eventually shocked to see what the director had persuaded his young actors to get up to on the screen.

Grahame Smith Stirling

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

"Is that why Billy the Kid had the drop on so many people, because he was a left-handed gun?" asks David Thomson in his piece about left-

handed actors and characters ('Sinister cinema', *S&S*, August). I am sorry to see my favourite film analyst fall into this old trap. Billy the Kid was not left-handed. The only authenticated picture of the outlaw is a full-length portrait, probably taken at Billy's request by an itinerant photographer at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, in 1880, which shows him apparently supporting a rifle with his right hand, while on his left hip there is a holstered six-shooter. But if you look closely, you can see the image is reversed. This is because the original photo was a reversal positive captured in the camera on an enamelled black iron plate, known as a tintype or ferrotype. Some publications show the picture correctly by choosing to flip it, but more commonly it is still the reversed version that gets printed, thereby perpetuating the myth of Billy the Kid's left-handedness. Billy the Kid might have been a misunderstood psychopath, but for sure, he was a right-handed one.

Clyde Jeavons by email

Additions and corrections

September p.87 *Dinosaur* 13, Cert PG, 94m 36s; p.88 *Finding Fela*, Cert 15, 120m 12s; p.94 *The Internet's Own Boy*, Cert 12A, 104m 45s; p.94 *The Keeper of Lost Causes*, Cert 15, 96m 31s; p.98 *Night Moves*, Cert 15, 112m 46s; p.99 *Obvious Child*, Cert 15, 84m 32s; p.100 *The Police Officer's Wife*, Cert 15, 175m 56s; p.105 *Two Days, One Night*, Cert 15, 95m 35s; p.106 *The Unbeatables*, Cert U, 97m 21s; p.80 *Wakolda*, Cert 12A, 93m 45s; p.110 In the DVD review of *Rapture*, Ellen Pollock is pictured, not Gunnel Lindblom as our caption stated.
August p.69 In *Boyhood*, Mason, Samantha, Mason Sr. and Mason Sr.'s new wife visit Mason's Sr.'s new in-laws (not his paternal grandparents as stated in our synopsis) for his 16th birthday.

THE BALLAD OF NARAYAMA



Death is not the end in Imamura Shōhei's bleak tale of a village community's struggle for survival, just another stage in the cycle of life

By Jasper Sharp

There's a hint of the supernatural in the closing scenes of Imamura Shōhei's 1983 Palme d'Or winner, *The Ballad of Narayama*, a film for the most part marked by its adherence to a documentary style of realism that feels more akin to the world of David Attenborough. After the aged Orin submits to be carried by her dutiful son Tatsuhei to the summit of Mount Narayama to be left to die in accordance with local custom, the landscape is enveloped by a sudden snowstorm – a seemingly divine act of purification that erases the muddy autumnal colour palette and blankets the littered skeletal remains of those who have passed before.

Circularity is at the heart of a film that begins with snowbound aerial shots of the hostile and craggy uplands in which the story's denizens eke out the most precarious of existences. Perhaps taking its cue from *Earth* (Tsuchi, 1939), Uchida Tomu's seminal portrait of rural hardship, *The Ballad of Narayama* is rich with images of fecundity and decay that unfold across the passing seasons as it details the events of Orin's final year as she tries to settle her family's affairs.

Fukazawa Shichirō's 1956 source novella about a remote village community governed by draconian laws to keep its population in check – central to which is the gruesome tradition of abandoning one's parents to die on the mountaintop when they reach 70 – derived

from myth rather than fact. The author drew inspiration from the folktale *Obasute-san* (a real mountain with this name, which translates as 'The mountain where old women are discarded', is located in the Japanese Alps in Nagano Prefecture).

Kinoshita Keisuke's 1958 adaptation adopted a heavily stylised mode of representation, drawing from kabuki. In contrast, Imamura's radically reworked script, which integrates elements from another Fukazawa story, *Tohoku no Zummutachi* (*The Miserable in North-eastern Japan*), is shot with the director's trademark ethnographical eye for detail, the human elements portrayed as very much embedded within a wider ecosystem. In an early scene, Tatsuhei shoots a hare only for it to be snatched away by a swooping falcon. As spring arrives promising new life, the discarded corpse of a baby is unveiled by the melting snow. In this forbidding environment where food is scarce, the delineation between man and beast is blurred – quite literally in the case of Tatsuhei's younger sibling Risuke, the malodorous village whipping boy who is shunned by the local female populace and who at one point indulges in congress with a neighbour's dog. Such scenes of grimy alfresco sexual union are depicted with a ribald eye for the absurdity of the human animal and a similar matter-of-fact frankness as the cutaways to frogs, birds of prey, rats and praying mantises copulating with – or devouring – one another.

As spring arrives, promising new life, the discarded corpse of a baby is unveiled by the melting snow

The suggestion is that the harsh codes of village law are the defining aspects of human society. Orin's own self-sacrifice for the greater good is lent added moral complexity by her earlier complicity in the death of her pregnant daughter-in-law Matsuyan; when Orin sends Matsuyan back to the home of her blood relations, the Ayama family, who have been accused of stealing crops, she does so in full knowledge of the deadly vengeance about to be meted out by the community upon the whole of this extended household of thieves. The shocking brutality of this act of mob rule is in keeping with the director's vision of the amoral pragmatism of this microcosm of the natural order, locked in its necessary state of mutual interdependence. Still, Imamura alludes to the folktale elements of the legend by portending the family's demise with a god's eye view of a house snake, the household's guardian deity, slithering away and abandoning them to their fate.

Superstition plays a crucial role in this society ruled by nativist systems of ancestor worship and the belief that spirit gods reside in everything. It is what lends the final quarter its most powerful moment. After leaving his mother behind on the mountain, Tatsuhei starts to wend his way back to his family home. En route, the strength of his bond with his mother is thrown into relief when he witnesses the fate of another elderly sacrifice, who cowers and caterwauls like a baby before being cast down the rocky slope by his son – something which is sure to haunt this family for many generations to come. Tatsuhei rushes back and calls to his mother, interrupting her private moment of beatitude as she sits silently awaiting her appointment with the legendary Narayama mountain god, only for her to dismissively wave him once more on his way. ●

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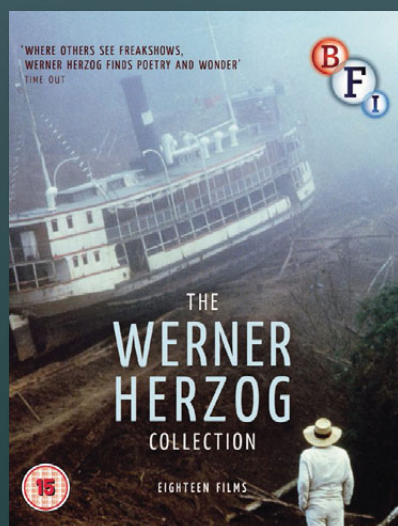
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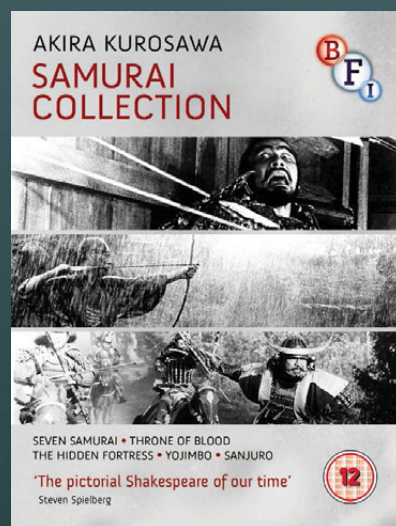
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